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**THE ROMANCE OF  
NORTHUMBERLAND**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE

THE ROMANCE OF WALES

THE AVON AND SHAKESPEARE'S COUNTRY

EXMOOR MEMORIES

WHEN SQUIRES AND FARMERS THRIVED

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF NORTH WALES

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF SOUTH WALES

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF THE LAKE COUNTRY

THE MARCH AND BORDERLAND OF WALES

THE GATEWAY OF SCOTLAND

OWEN GLYNDWR

LIFE OF WOLFE

THE FIGHT WITH FRANCE FOR NORTH AMERICA

LIFE OF CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH

LIFE OF GUY CARLETON, LORD DORCHESTER

SKETCHES FROM OLD VIRGINIA





NEW CASTLE-ON-TYNE

# THE ROMANCE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

BY  
A. G. BRADLEY

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY  
FRANK SOUTHGATE, R.B.A.  
AND TWELVE OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND AN ENDPAPER MAP

FIFTH EDITION



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country answer to the map. It is curious that in view of the time-honoured and perennial plaint of the more fastidious that the romantic portions of England are over-run, he should never have discovered that this is an hallucination due to the fact that, like most other people, he does not know his own country. An equally striking and spacious wilderness, for that matter, varying only in detail, lies also hidden from the tourist and from fugitive literature and journalism, in South Wales, but that is not celebrated in household ballads and familiar tales, and belongs rather to the song and story or the Cymry.

But there is a great deal more in Northumberland than the map would suggest, much of which will, I trust, reveal itself to such readers as may bear me company through these pages. But to do justice to Northumberland between the covers of a single volume is not easy. To borrow a rather happy phrase from a well-known author, I would call this rather an "Appreciation" of that noble county.

A. G. B.

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# THE ROMANCE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTORY

**A**LMOST every Southron who enters Northumberland does so by way of the lofty bridge at Newcastle, which carries the North Eastern railway across the Tyne. It is needless to add that not one probably in a thousand of such pilgrims by the Scotch express who get this passing glimpse of one of the most imposing spectacles in industrial Britain has any thought of the county of Northumberland in his mind. No Southerners to speak of ever contemplate it as the scene of a holiday, and the experience of a summer and autumn spent in various portions of its delectable highlands and striking sea-coast enables me to say this much with tolerable confidence. For one thing, a somewhat similar delusion is, I fancy, abroad as attaches to South Wales, namely, that, like that other delightful and inspiring country, Northumberland mainly consists of coal mines, which is the more singular, as these very regions actually contain the two most extensive and unbroken areas of virgin wilderness south of the western Highlands. Now, Durham is in very truth deplorably besmirched, though at the head of the Tees and Wear it still retains some noble heathclad solitudes. But when Durham joins Northumberland where Gateshead, Jarrow, and South Shields look across

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the deep and narrow Tyne to Newcastle and its tributary towns, there is an industrial orgie indeed, not merely of coal, but of the innumerable enterprises its presence stimulates, and all of the most resounding kind. You have not only here the energy of the North, but of a North that faces the rasping breezes of the German Ocean, and is thereby encouraged, no doubt, to that process of selection known as the survival of the fittest.

From the lofty bridge over which his train makes cautious way, the Briton's heart should glow as his eye rests on the deep murky river, crowded with shipping, and its sloping shores densely packed with the joyless marts of commerce and the belching chimneys of industry. Yet this, after all, gives but a faint idea of the energy of Newcastle compared with the spectacle unfolded to any enterprising soul who has a mind to board one of the many little steamers that ply hence down the river to Tynemouth. It is only a six or eight mile voyage, but, from the frequent stoppages on either side, takes nearly two hours in the accomplishment. The Tyne is deep and comparatively narrow, a mere hundred yards or so in width by the city. Though broadening gradually, it never spreads into a serious estuary, but remains in effect a river till it races out into the open sea beneath the ruins of Tynemouth Abbey between yellow sands and once again under clear skies. But in the mean time the ear will have been continuously assailed by the deafening clangour of shipyards, and the eye confused by miles of aerial scaffolding and the hulks of huge vessels in all shapes and stages of construction enclosed therein ; of busy, murky collieries, with their dingy wharves and fleets of lighters ; of ocean craft of every size and every nation on the water, some battered by a thousand storms, some that have never yet touched the open sea and are still in the hands of carpenters and painters.

But I have no concern here with these smoky scenes of turmoil, nor with the aspect of Newcastle, residential or industrial. Hidden away in corners among all this rampant modernity are little fragments of masonry that still speak of

the ancient life of the city. So there are, no doubt, in Manchester and Liverpool and Birmingham. But none of these places had a tithe of the strategic importance in olden days that can be boasted of by their busy rival in the north. One solitary and conspicuous relic of feudal times even yet survives in the very heart and front of Newcastle. For the fortress, partially restored to be sure, which William Rufus raised here upon the Tyne—the actual germ, in short, from which the city grew—still lifts its smoke-grimed battlements amid the roar of street and railroad traffic. Dwarfed and mocked by the overpowering erections of modern commerce, and, indeed, itself of no great dimensions for its character, a more pathetically situated remnant of Norman chivalry I never beheld. One finds mediæval castles in queer company often enough, but I know of none so entirely overwhelmed by rampant modernity as this besmirched but proud and massive little keep. Once actually advertised as a mill site ; later on nearly converted into a railway signal-box ; such honour as may yet be possible is now paid to it, for its ancient chambers are in the secure and loving occupation of the Northumberland Society of Antiquaries, which is well. The river beneath, save in the manner and burden of its craft, has altered nothing since those walls were raised. For the Tyne is not as most rivers that bear the navies of great seaports. A dozen or fifteen miles up it is playing among rocks and broad gravelly shallows, where trout and samlets still sport in clear mountain water. And later on, when we see the nature and the size of the country that it drains, it will be easy to imagine how sudden and how formidable are the floods that rush beneath these bridges and betimes cover the lower floors and fill the cellars of the riverside tenements. In the eighteenth century another relic of the Middle Ages, a stone bridge laden with dwelling-houses after the curious habit of our ancestors, disappeared one stormy night, with all its human freight, in a few seconds before the fury of the peaty waters, gathered as they are from a hundred mountains, glens, and valleys.

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I am persuaded that no reader will expect to be told here the long story of Newcastle, which, as a matter of course, is intimately associated with that of the county. Though enough and to spare, perhaps, of the latter will crop up as we ascend its vales or linger by its becastled seashores, the bustling thoroughfares of Grey or Grainger Street are not inspiring for such a theme. Yet no capital of a county was ever more of a capital, few, perhaps, so much as Newcastle has been since measurable time to Northumberland, set though it be in its extreme south-eastern corner. For there is nothing else within its borders remotely approaching the Tyneside city, only a few old country towns famous in history and in tales of derring-do, but otherwise mere marts of rural commerce. What influence the wealth of Newcastle has had on such a province needs no telling. Yet the city is essentially Northumbrian, or, having regard to the geographical partnership of Durham, essentially provincial ; much more so, I should say, than Liverpool, Manchester, or Bristol. In blood and character and dialect it has less alien alloy, I imagine, than any great English seaport and industrial centre. But this is only an impression ; I did not intend to do more than make a start from Newcastle, though, having said these few words about its busy and more unlovely aspect, I must in justice to its public spirit say one more in praise of the fine parks and breathing spaces that it has secured and beautified for the benefit of its working classes. It is a quite admirable city to get out of too. In half an hour and for a few pence to an electric railway the working man can disport himself in the fresh waters of the North Sea, which lash the rocky coves and sandy shores of Tynemouth. In an hour or two his employer may be by a salmon pool in the romantic gorges of the North Tyne or the Coquet, or on a grouse moor above Hexham, or golfing among the dunes that line so much of the Northumberland coast. Though a Roman station existed here, since it was the eastern extremity of Hadrian's famous wall, followed by a Saxon settlement of some kind, William Rufus, with his enduring castle, was the

actual founder of the town. After many vicissitudes of ownership, in which Scotland was much concerned, Northumberland became an integral part of England, with Newcastle as its capital, in the reign of Henry the Second, and its frequent military base in those centuries of Border warfare which ensued. Girt about with walls now vanished, it sustained a siege on behalf of the Crown in the civil war against the Scots at great odds, and was at last carried by assault. Charles the First, as everybody knows, was here for a long time before he passed over to the Scots, while lastly, in the '45, it was a chief base of operations against the Jacobites, only failing to save the capture of Carlisle for want of road facilities. The question of coal, too, touches everybody. Shipbuilding and the manufacture of guns are remote technicalities to most of us. We all must feel some interest in the history of coal as an item in the household bill. Newcastle, of course, is a name synonymous with any curiosity we may feel on the subject, and waiving all speculation on the amount extracted by the Romans and Saxons for local use, it is interesting to note that the first charter granting the burghers of Newcastle liberty to dig for coal in the castle field without the walls was made in 1238 at their urgent request by Henry the Third, followed soon after by much more liberal concessions. This was the beginning of the coal trade, and the domestic use of that invaluable mineral in other parts of the country. Soon afterwards some of the Durham folk received similar privileges, but they had to carry their stuff across the Tyne to Newcastle and pay the licence exacted there. By the end of the thirteenth century a great deal of coal was being shipped to London, so much that in 1305 it was temporarily suppressed there for the smoke it made. It was used regularly, we are told, in the Royal palaces, and the general interdict was only temporary, for in 1325 the coal export to London had increased, and the first licence to export it from the Tyne to foreign countries was granted. It was not, however, till 1384 that the Bishop of Durham's subjects were allowed to mine freely, and then the concession



was granted by Richard the Third, not apparently for love of them or their bishop, but for his respect for the memory of St. Cuthbert, which seems singularly unpractical and foolish.

In the sixteenth century coals were sold in London at 4s. a chaldron, but the price fluctuated violently. The shrewd business eye of the great Elizabeth seized at once on the opportunity offered by the Northern coal mines to an enterprising and acquisitive monarch. She "obtained" a lease of all the Durham fields for £90 a year, and then proceeded to manipulate a corner in coals with much success. She annexed the private pits of the Percies which they were profitably developing themselves, and only consented after a time to allow them a small percentage on their own stuff. She chartered a company in Newcastle as virtual monopolists in the sale of Northumbrian coal to shippers, and so engineered matters that the Lord Mayor of London formally complained that the Newcastle freemen's rights had been bartered away to a monopoly and begged for some limitation to the price, which had now been forced up to a pound a chaldron. In the next reign these greedy monopolists began to mix trash coal and slate with their consignments. But no longer *in quasi* partnership with royalty, the offenders were dragged before the Star Chamber, and not merely heavily fined but imprisoned. To Charles the First this source of wealth offered glittering possibilities, and he clapped the huge duty of 5s. a chaldron on all coal exported abroad. He also renewed the monopolies which had abated for substantial considerations, so that in his son's time the price had been forced up again to a pound, and the London shipments began once more to be full of slate and rubbish, the former penalties of fine and imprisonment being repeated. After the great fire, a temporary import duty of 3s. was put on in London as an assistance towards the building of churches. Soon afterwards Charles granted to the Duke of Rutland 1s. duty on all coals landed in London, which was only purchased from his heirs by the Government in 1800. This monstrous piece of favouritism, as it seems to us, was the origin of the shilling

tax with which modern Londoners are sufficiently familiar. In the Stuart period Newcastle had 10,000 men employed in the mines, keels, and lighters connected with the coal trade, and a century later she was exporting a million tons a year. Everybody knows the ancient ditty of "Weel may the keel row." As some Scottish collectors have had the hardihood to include it among their national airs, it is more than probable that to many Southerners the song suggests some pretty fancy of a Leith mariner breasting the blue waves of the North Sea or the Firth of Forth. As a matter of fact, it is a very old Newcastle air, and the keel, a local coal barge, which has been used from earliest times to convey the coal from waggons to the vessel, the word being, I believe, the old Saxon equivalent for ship or boat. The keelmen of Newcastle were a distinct body of men, and their boats were constructed to measure, like the waggons, for the convenience of the Customs and the trade generally.

Some counties enjoy a peculiar distinction of shape, wrought thus by the trend of sea-coast or mountain ranges, and their form rises involuntarily to the mind at the bare mention of their names. Northumberland, to me at least, has always been such a county; in rough image a right-angled triangle, with a short base formed by the Tyne, a long upright facing the North Sea, with a third and yet longer side shaded thick with continuous moors and mountains. This is not accurate, of course, but it is a good enough impression for general purposes. Thus, at any rate, it struts upon the map, a worthy unit of that defiant gamecock-looking fragment of the world, the island of Britain; its head thrust aggressively up the coast of its old enemy and crowned with the hoary walls of Berwick; its foot upon the coal fields and shipyards of Newcastle, the main seat and source of its power in modern times. Of all English counties, too, surely Northumberland is most nobly and sonorously named. It may fairly rank in this particular with Glamorgan, as it rivals her in subterranean wealth and in the magnificent remains of feudal and border warfare.

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Cheviots, it will be fitting to say some few preliminary words concerning the early story of the county that may be worthy of remembrance when traversing it later.

Northumberland, from the Roman to the Stuart period, was always Borderland, and prolific of all those robust characteristics inevitable to the situation. The great Roman wall ran through it, along which clustered the densest population in Roman Britain, and where the hardest fighting was continually going forward in its defence against the valiant barbarians to the northward. On the Saxon invasion, arrivals from Sleswig settled in groups along these Northumbrian shores and up the Tweed, to unite in time their scattered bands under a single chieftain, Ida, known to the harried Britons by the significant title of the "Flamebearer." From the fortified rock of Bamburgh, to which these details more rightly belong than to Alnwick, Ida ruled over the region lying between the Forth and Tees known as Bernicia, while a rival prince held sway over Deira or modern Yorkshire. This could not last, and the inevitable struggle for mastery resulted in the fusion of both into the great Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. Christianity came there by means of one of the early kings, Oswald to wit, who had been domiciled for some time among the monks of Iona. At this moment, 635 A.D., the New Northumbria was being sorely pressed and harried by the Welsh, and when the armies met near Hexham in what promised to be a decisive conflict, the Christian king promised his still unregenerate soldiers certain victory if they would undertake to embrace his faith. This they readily did, clustering round a wooden cross which was hastily erected, and then immediately proceeded to win the battle over their adversaries, though these last must have been mainly Christians of long habit.

But the vow of the Northumbrians proved more difficult in the fulfilment than in the promise thus extracted under fear of defeat. Oswald's missionaries whom he imported from Iona went back in despair, and as a last resource despatched the gentle and persuasive St. Aidan to try his

hand on these barbarous colonists. The experiment proved entirely successful. St. Aidan settled at Lindisferne or Holy Island as first Bishop of Northumbria, and by degrees turned its entire population to the Cross. But the Christianity of Northumbria sprang from the Celtic Church, and its different observances soon created religious friction with the Saxons of the south, who had received their creed from Rome. In 664, however, the northerners gave way peaceably, and reaped their reward of a union with the Latin Church by an immense access of material prosperity consequent on the building of handsome stone churches and monasteries along the coast, and the reclamation of wild land. Two illustrious saints and bishops, St. Cuthbert, to whom Durham in after days was dedicated, and St. Wilfrid, the founder of Hexham, stand out in this period above any of the kings that succeeded one another to the throne of the powerful and generally progressive kingdom. The venerable Bede, too, was born at Wearmouth, and died in harness at Jarrow on the Tyne in the eighth century. But with the beginning of the next and the coming of the Norsemen, the kingdom of Northumbria, though waxing in arts and luxury, had waned in vigour, and had already yielded allegiance to the west Saxon kings. Political dissensions and ecclesiastical laxity made it a comparatively easy prey to the heathen invaders, who, having harried it again and again, finally settled in modern Yorkshire, leaving the old Bernicia from the Tyne to the Forth in the hands of its people under leaders tributary to themselves. It is worthy of note, however, that no Danes are thought then or ever to have settled in this northern half of old Northumbria, and that the men of modern Northumberland, Berwickshire, and East Lothian are held to-day as of purer English stock than any other in these islands. The long and complicated struggle for mastery between Saxon and Dane in all parts of England resulted in 924 in the suzerainty of the west Saxon, King Edward, over the turbulent people of all Northumbria, which then appeared to have been definitely divided into English, Danish, and Norwegian

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territory. The rapid succession and the violent ends of their many Reguli form a sanguinary and protracted record. It is enough here that the now degenerate kingship of Northumbria was abolished in 954, and converted into an earldom, the holders being practically the viceroys of the English kings. But this in no way made for peace or order, and Northumberland was the scene of frequent conflicts between the English and the Danes or Scots, Lothian being about the year 1000 detached and handed over by agreement to the Scottish king. These transfers of provinces to this or that overlord must not, of course, be taken in quite the serious modern sense. The people of the coast-belt between Tyne and Forth were at any rate themselves homogeneous, and one can turn with relief from the complicated turmoil that distinguished Northumberland during its earldom period before the Norman conquest to the arrival of the Norman Conqueror.

William went slowly with his most distant province, and left it for a time under native rulers tributary to himself. Encouraged by a Danish fleet, however, the Northumbrians turned on William, and even seized York. The Norman, after his thorough method, not only overthrew the revolting earls, but so devastated Northumberland that for nine years it had scarcely any animate existence, and provided one of those epochs so disconcerting to theories of racial continuity. Malcolm of Scotland, who then owned Cumberland, a very thorn in the side of the Northern English, also defied the Conqueror, after having acknowledged his overlordship by proxy. So the latter swept Scotland to the Tay, and made its warlike king swear allegiance in person and on his knees. This amounted to very little. The earls were out again on the warpath, both with one another and against William Rufus, who, having captured Bamburgh, the old seat of Northumbrian government or misgovernment, abolished its earldom, which had now lasted nearly a century and a half, and vested it in the Crown. Fighting, however, went merrily and steadily on, till Stephen, in his usual straits, granted the earldom to the son of the Scottish king, who

already held Cumberland by a now traditional custom. But Henry the Second soon upset this arrangement, restored Northumberland, now long bounded by the Tweed, to the English Crown, and made it definitely that integral portion of England it has ever since remained.

More than ever, if possible, it now became the buffer State against the ceaseless aggressions of the Scots. These grew much worse, and assumed a more definitely international character after those attempts of Edward the First to annex Scotland, which were only thwarted by his death. War and rapine public and private became a normal feature of Northumbrian life till the union of the Crown in 1603, while for a century later the remote dalesmen, with their neighbours over the Border, still observed towards one another a mediæval code in the matter of *meum et tuum*, and in their standards of manly virtue. Northumberland shows its stormy past all over its surface. There is much that is ancient, but almost every bit of this, whether entire or fragmentary, breathes of bygone war. There is no cheerful and sunny old age in cottage, farm-house, or hall, or scarcely any, such as one is accustomed to, in most parts of England. Almost everything not obviously martial in conception is commonplace, substantial, and of comparatively recent date, and looks more so from the massive nature of the Northumbrian masonry. Indeed, you must not approach the county in the frame of mind you would approach Devonshire or shires with a comparatively bloodless past, or even the Welsh border, whose stormy period ended more than two centuries earlier, and left abundant space for bowery villages and halls to age and mellow besides the ruins of the mediæval fortress. This North East is splendid, but it is hard, as in some respects are its people. It is spacious and breezy, upland and lowland alike; eminently romantic too, but its romance is of a robust kind, if the seeming paradox be admissible. It is or was poetic, but its minstrels sang in a moving fashion of their own of war and fire and foray much more than they sang of love or flowers, of song birds or waterfalls, though these softer joys were present to their eyes in a high degree.

## CHAPTER II

### ALNWICK, WARKWORTH, AND THE PERCIES

TO the enterprising stranger bent upon the exploration of Northumberland, no better headquarters for operations of this nature upon the northern half of the county than Alnwick or Alnmouth could be suggested, and if the wanderer, like so many of his fellows, have no choice, but to sally forth between mid-July and mid-September, some definite headquarters is more than desirable. For accommodation in Northumbria is limited, and the folks of the industrial centres round and about Tyneside have recently developed a wholesome but inconvenient passion for the rural delights of their own county, a creditable impulse almost unknown among the same classes a decade or two ago, who were then staunch patrons of the greater northern watering-places, where negro minstrels caper and bands bray. So, at least, I am informed.

Alnmouth is a quiet little watering-place, though actually the largest save suburban Tynemouth on the Northumberland coast, and clustering, as already mentioned, with considerable effect on an elevated grassy promontory where the Aln joins the sea. The local pronunciation by the way is Alemouth. But small watering-places develop a self-consciousness and a painful anxiety to please everybody (except in the matter of charges), even those of Northumberland, whose more provincial folk retain the quality of local patriotism in an exalted degree, and have the stoutest convictions that they are the salt of England if not of the earth, a pardonable weakness at least among men who are doers rather than spouters and measure many inches. But the Alnmouth people have been corrupted

by much consort with townsmen and aliens, and have weakly given way to the calling of their town as it is spelt. Here at any rate the visitor will find delightful stretches of sand and sward, a golf course of the orthodox kind that was certainly flourishing twenty years ago, and the breath of the North Sea in fullest perfection. No suggestion is here of smart frocks or gorgeous tailoring, nor yet of mock Ethiopians or Ally Slopers, but a handy station on the main line with a branch to Alnwick, and many other desirable spots in the romantic uplands of the interior.

Alnwick is five miles inland, and with its noble castle spreads along the crest of a hill in a country that has already begun to be steep. It harbours about six thousand souls, and has one hotel of an unimpeachable Quarter Sessions aspect, besides numerous tenements where genteel visitors, as the old phraseology of the road had it, can doubtless find comfort and attention.

Alnwick is a brave old place, and wears its years well, like all these northern towns—too well perhaps for the artist. For the houses that line either side of its long, wide, main street, or of the market-place and the bull ring that open out of it, wear the sombre somewhat uniform aspect of a town of stone. Time and storm make little impress on Northumbrian walls, which, within a decade or two from the mason's hand, assume a gravity of aspect almost worthy of their oldest neighbours. Still, for a northern town, Alnwick, if hard and grey, is almost picturesque, and not unworthy of the feudal atmosphere which breathes all over it from the mighty castle at its northern extremity that slightly dominates it, and, in a social sense, has done so absolutely, and on the whole beneficently, with intervals since time began. The street nomenclature of Alnwick is redolent, as one would expect of siege and sally. There is Bondgate within and without, Narrowgate, Bailiffgate, Pottergate, and other names that speak of perilous times. The first of these, the wide, main artery of the town, is blocked midway in picturesque inconvenience by a massive turreted pile, through whose deep



cramped archway all wheeled traffic has to pass in single file. Still, it bears Hotspur's name, having been erected by his grandson in the fifteenth century as one of the four gates of the town when the latter was surrounded with high walls, a considerable fragment of which still stands a few feet high. No true Northumbrian, I should hope, would murmur at having betimes to check his steed, or even his motor, in deference to the time-worn Percy lion which still prances indistinctly over the portals of this hoary archway. For Hotspur is the hero of Northumbrian story, and competition for the honour in this hard hitting country must have been keen. It is even suggested that the Northumbrian burr, unwriteable and quite unique, was originated by that fiery soul, or rather that a slight deformity in the hero's speech was eagerly imitated by the mail-clad youth of the north, who held him in every respect as their model of chivalry and human perfection. The clipping of the terminal *g*, a social trick of recent years, so zealously cultivated even to the suburbs, I have been told on good authority first emanated from the stable proclivities of a famous ducal house pre-eminent in sport. But in this latter case, unlike Hotspur's little throaty trouble, if the pretty legend may be entertained, there was no question of its adoption by the lower classes, as it was there already in great perfection.

Another turreted gateway, of mediæval aspect at the first glance, guards the entrance of a side street into the town though raised, I believe, on the site of a more businesslike predecessor. Away up among some gardens at the top of the town, waiting as it were to catch the eye of the stranger as he first emerges from the railway station, is a stone obelisk about eighty feet in height. My first impression on catching sight of it, from the precincts of the North Eastern Railway, was, oddly enough, shared by my companion, or I should have foreborne to note such an irrelevant trifle, namely, that I was in the presence of some magnificent tribute to the late Lord Salisbury worthy of so stout a Tory stronghold as Alnwick. At a different angle, however, the supposititious





AT NEWICK CASTLE

profile of that great statesman developed into the noble proportions of the Percy lion. This memorial appears to have been reared early in the last century by a grateful tenantry to the Duke of that day in recognition of certain remissions of rent granted during a period of agricultural depression. What would the modern land reformer say to that? As a mere Tory, I permitted myself the flippant reflection that if this kindly impulse had animated tenant farmers at the end of the century as it did these particular ones at the beginning, the face of England would resemble a gigantic asparagus bed. But before the Percy lion it behoves us to be respectful, and indeed when facing it once more over the outer gateway of the magnificent castle, built by Hotspur's grandfather, at the further end of the town, one's mood is wholly reverential, not merely towards those warlike Percies of old, but towards a House that has maintained itself at once so worthily and so conspicuously, in peace and war, in public and in private, for such a term of centuries.

At the end of the wide, quiet, old-fashioned cross street which runs a brief course along the northern fringe of the steep hill above the Aln, a group of lofty towers confront one rising in flank and rear of the fourteenth-century barbican and gateway. Each one is associated with some name or story, while over the entrance and along the massive curtain wall, and elsewhere conspicuous, are a number of quaint life-size figures of armed warriors in various attitudes, and obviously engaged in repelling a Scottish attack. The castle is said to cover five acres, and it looks imposingly down upon the bright streams of the Aln, rippling through well-timbered meadows far beneath. To grapple here with such a stupendous mass of building varying in period, complicated by much though careful restoration, such a blend of Norman foundation, of fourteenth-century superstructure and eighteenth-century additions and renovations, and with all so packed with treasure, is not my intention. Such efforts within such a small space are apt to result in the mere cataloguing and recording of inanimate objects, which

I more than suspect is not stimulating to the reader, who will find them, if the occasion demands, in pamphlets or books of a more technical character. It will be enough, perhaps, to say that the general effect of Alnwick, as a combination of the feudal past and the modern residence, is generally regarded as almost without an equal in England, more particularly if its imposing presence is associated with its rich and abounding chronicles. I do not know Warwick, but an acquaintance who is a native, and reared in the faith that there was nothing like it, admitted that when confronted recently with Alnwick that faith was broken. But then Warwick, like most English castles remote from frontiers, is famous rather for the domestic splendour and pageantry of its past. It had its warlike episodes, no doubt, but it was not the object for centuries of menace and attack by alien foes like Alnwick, Bamburgh, or Norham on the one hand, or the great castles of the Welsh border on the other. Alnwick is a standing monument to the fierce Anglo-Scottish wars, and the reader will have had his fill of these, I dare say, before he has done with me. But they come up to me more naturally on the fields where they were fought than beside the portraits or the relics of men who took part in them. No place, however, could be so fitting as this to say somewhat of the great House of Percy, that stands, not merely for Alnwick, but for Northumberland, in a sense more complete than does any other single family for any one county of England that I can think of, not reckoning merely by to-day or yesterday, but for more than six centuries. Some dukes of great territorial title have no obvious association with it, and are seated elsewhere. Others have quite uninspiring titles. With many, again, there is nothing to define the sphere of their influence. But with the Percies there never has been, nor could there be now, any hesitation whatever in identifying them with that broad territory between Tyne and Tweed, between the Cheviots and the sea, and within this, almost since time is worth counting, they have never had, in the wide sense of the term, a rival. In a province always well stocked with

powerful and with some quite illustrious families, it would be safe to say that none could ever have been near enough to even feel aggrieved that they were not held as the Percies were held, with any show of reason. Of envy and hatred, there was always plenty, but hardly jealousy. Even in these democratic days this glamour of a great name, so intimately bound up for ages as it is with the stirring tale of Northumberland, still survives among people not given to humility or abasing themselves, or to honey'd speech.

The first of the name to arrive in England came over with the Conqueror from the village of Perce, near St. Lo in Normandy, where he was a noble of consequence. He was granted lands near Whitby in Yorkshire, where his zeal in agriculture and the reclaiming of waste lands seemed to have equalled his valour in the field. Lest his sword should rust, however, he joined Robert's crusade, and ultimately fell within sight of Jerusalem. Three barons of his race succeeded him, till in Henry the First's time only a young woman remained seized of the family estate. Henry's second wife, Adeliza of Brabant, was just then casting about for an English heiress for her younger half-brother, who had the blood of Charlemagne in his veins but no assets to speak of. An excellent and accomplished youth, however, was this Josceline de Louvain, and when produced in England found sufficient favour in the eyes of the lady and her father, Baron William, to secure their consent. But not for all the House of Brabant nor the blood of Charlemagne would the baron consent to sever the name of Percy from its domains. So the young man had in that respect to efface himself, his sole contribution beyond his virtues to the stock he was to perpetuate being the Brabant motto, "*Esperance en Dieu*," which, with the name of Percy substituted for that of the deity, was to resound on a hundred bloody fields in Britain and Europe. Forty years later a grandson William of this alliance, aged fifteen, was in legal possession of the family honours. A strenuous and acquisitive Percy uncle, however, who by the custom of later ages would have himself had the family honours, practically kept

possession of the estates and usurped the title, nominally as guardian till death relieved the weak William in middle age of the thralldom of this overpowering relative, a mighty warrior and a friend of Cœur de Lion, who, it is asserted would have sold Northumberland to the Scots as he would have sold anything for his diversions in Palestine but for Richard Percy. William seems to have been the only weak Percy of the lot, for his offspring one after another went on the warpath with the old traditional valour and energy. It was not till the death of Edward the First, however, that the Percies, still in Yorkshire, acquired a footing in Northumberland, though they had been this long time renowned upon the Scottish border. Henry Percy, with his two brothers, was entrusted by the great Edward on his deathbed at Burgh-on-Sands with the task of securing his son's succession, and in reward was permitted to purchase Alnwick, on which property it seems he had for some time cast a longing eye. Fighting Scotsmen being his passion, it was only natural he should wish to be handier to them. Alnwick had been first granted to Gilbert de Tesson, one of the Conqueror's many standard-bearers. Then it passed to the De Vescis, the last of whom, dying without heirs in 1297, got royal permission to settle it on his natural son, then an infant. Bishop Beke of Durham was made trustee, and, no doubt to show his pious disapproval of his dead friend's amours, sold it to Henry Percy in 1309, and pocketed the money. Percy's conscience, if not the bishop's, was pricked, and he voluntarily made some financial amends to the despoiled bastard and got a free title. Henry Percy, now the ninth baron, set to work to rebuild the castle, which the episcopal trustee had allowed to fall into a deplorable condition. He built the barbican and the gatehouse, and the Abbot's, Falconers', Armourers', and Constable's tower, more or less as they stand to-day, with many other portions. This first Lord of Alnwick, who of course by the way retained his Yorkshire estates, busied himself, as was inevitable, in the affairs of the unfortunate Edward the Second. He was with him at Bannockburn, and in an

endeavour to cover the route of the English army was taken prisoner. Soon ransomed, he returned to Alnwick to die, of a broken heart, it is said, at that overwhelming catastrophe to the English arms, a procedure not surely impossible for one who had fought by the side of the first Edward.

His son, the tenth baron and the fourth Henry, was a wonder. Before he was twenty he had led his troops repeatedly against the Scots, and had become a terror to evil-doing barons on his own side of the Border, where intrigue and outrage went hand-in-hand with international strife. He comes on the stage with the first of the great Douglasses. The glory of Crecy, to be sure, was denied him, but for a greater individual though less remembered glory. For it was to defend England against an army of fifty thousand Scotsmen led by Douglas, and with only such a scratch force of clerics and amateurs as remained in the north. "Good tall trenchermen, however, as were not afraid of a cracked crown, though they had no hair to hide the wound." The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishops of Durham and Carlisle, commanded the four divisions respectively. It sounds to-day like a comic opera! but was not in the least like one in the performance. For with inferior numbers, and inferior but most spirited troops, he won a crushing victory at Neville's Cross, chased the Scots to Berwick, and saved the country from incalculable disaster.

A little fellow his son, of small stature even when grown, but of a lion heart, had been fighting all this time by his side, and when he succeeded in 1352, this "*parvus miles*," as the chroniclers call him, "loyal and brave and kindly hearted, so generous that he coveted not the lands of others," fully maintained the glories of his line. He led a body of Northumbrians at Crecy, but hurried back in time to be at his father's side at Neville's Cross, where the spirit that animated his small frame seems to have shamed the laggard's valour and taken by surprise the brawny Scotsmen, into whose ranks he threw himself with unflinching courage. The Wardenship of one or more of the Scottish Marches had already become a Percy



appanage, and was held for most of his time by this little hero, who married in boyhood a Plantagenet, and a daughter of the Earl of Lancaster. The affray, arising out of hunting disputes with the Douglas, which, blended with the Otterburn of Hotspur, inspired the ballad of Chevy Chace, is accredited to the period of this "parvus miles." He died in 1368, and was buried with his father at Alnwick.

His son, another Henry, was the early and constant friend of his cousin John of Gaunt. At fourteen he fought at Poitiers, and at seventeen married another cousin, a Neville of Raby. He was knighted by the Black Prince, and, with his brother Thomas so celebrated in Froissart, seems to have been in the thick of everything. Just before his father's death he was Warden of both Marches, but was not, however, fortunate in his early Scottish wars, one fiasco and stampede of his followers at Duns provoking a wealth of gibing Scottish rhyme.

The hunting disputes with the Douglasses continued, leading betimes to incidents in the prolonged duel between these illustrious families. In a breathing space the Percy went with a picked following to France, taking with him his son of eight, afterwards the famous Hotspur, but Du Guesclin made things too hot on this occasion for the English. When Percy returned to Alnwick, he drowned his disappointment in savage assaults on the Scots, who had been mercilessly raiding Northumberland, and for two years fire and slaughter reigned ceaselessly on the Border.

"They spairit neither man nor wyfe,  
Young or old of mankind that bare lyfe,  
Like wilde wolfis in furiositie,  
Baith brint and slewe with greate crueltie."

The old earldom of Northumberland was revived by Richard the Second in the person of this Percy, who of all heads of his House is perhaps the most familiar to us, not merely as the father of Hotspur, but for the long and active part he played in the affairs of England. He joined his cousin John of Gaunt in supporting Wickliffe, and marched

by his side, sword in hand, through London, when he attended the summons of the bishops at St. Paul's, and stood guard over him in the cathedral to the great chagrin of the prelates. He was made Earl Marshal of England at the accession of Richard the Second under protest from the daughter of the Earl of Norfolk, who claimed it by heredity. He kept it just long enough to officiate at the coronation, and then threw it up for the greater entertainment that was offered just then by the Scots on the Border, who had seized Berwick, which he retook by assault with Hotspur, still a child at his side.

The latter, born at Alnwick in 1366, was knighted at the Coronation, having already seen three years of fighting in France and Scotland. Berwick was retaken by surprise, and once more the Percies, after a few days' siege, had to carry it by assault. This was led by Hotspur, though the sobriquet was not yet earned, at the incredible age of twelve. Every Scotsman was killed, and the matter ended satisfactorily for the Percies.

Lancaster now came north with an army against the Scots, but instead of fighting them made a humiliating peace while his men ravaged in Northumberland. Earl Percy now flung off his lifelong friend, and at a royal banquet soon after at Berkhamstead the two came to blows, and had to be separated by force, Percy being locked up and bound over to keep the peace. At the first opportunity, however, the feud broke out again, and the two enemies, with their several retainers, treated the terrified citizens of London to a series of gigantic street fights. The Percy war-cry, however, was needed again in Scotland; and then, under threat of French invasion, young Henry was sent with a force of nine hundred men to guard Yarmouth. The French not turning up, this fiery soul impressed all the Yarmouth fishing-boats, and went to hunt them up at home, ravaging the country round Calais, and bringing off a store of booty. It was the rapidity of this enterprise that gained him among his followers the name of "Hotspur," which quickly spread; for he now became the

idol of the gilded youth of England. "They acclaimed him in London louder than the King." His very defect of speech was imitated, and competition was keen to enter his service. Bitter jealousy was inevitable among some of those he had supplanted, and they attempted his death by tampering with a boat in which he sailed for France, but he was reserved for a nobler end. We shall meet Hotspur, however, and his border fights again, while the conspicuous part which he and his father played in the events which led to the former's death at Shrewsbury and the latter's execution later on are a familiar bit of English history. The confiscation of the Percy estates and the long refuge of Hotspur's young son, the heir, at the court of Scotland, make a short break in the breathless tale of this vigorous race. In 1416, the year after Agincourt, the lad was restored by Henry the Fifth as second earl to the full honours and possessions of his forefathers. His first act was to procure his grandfather's mouldering head from London, and bury it in Hotspur's grave at York Minster. He married a Neville, and some romance has gathered about the marriage, through the well-known ballad on Warkworth Hermitage by his remote descendant, Bishop Percy, of anecdotal and Border ballad fame.

It will be enough to say that the second earl was in every way worthy of his ancestors. He was Warden of the Marches, raised armies, and fought the kind hosts of his youth across the Border with patriotic and conscientious ardour. He also rebuilt the walls of Alnwick, which had been laid low by them. But he was also useful in making conciliatory arrangements with Scotland, short-lived though they were, and in performing the same office in regard to France, where he resided for a time as ambassador. Hotspur's son was distinguished in the tourney as in the field, where he and the Scots gave each other many hard knocks. Alnwick itself on one occasion was burnt and sacked by the latter. Constantly spoken of as "the great Earl of Northumberland," he embraced the Lancastrian side, and fell at St. Albans in a gallant attempt to save the day in 1455.

The next Henry and third earl was a seasoned warrior of thirty-four when he succeeded his father. Though the Yorkists were dominant they dare not tamper with the succession of a man who had already "at his own expense" and in his own person beaten back a Scottish invasion of England. He fought like a lion in the Wars of the Roses, commanding the defeated Lancastrian army at Towton Field, where he and one of his three remaining brothers who fought with him fell fighting valiantly. Acts of attainder were now taken out by Edward the Fourth's Parliament against the Percies, of whom Sir Ralph was the only remaining brother. He held Dunstanburgh with a picked force against every attempt to dislodge him, and so harried the Yorkists of the county, though all England was now in their hands, that the king pardoned in despair the "Gledd (Kite) of Dunstanburgh," as he was called in the north, and made him governor of the castle. Even this did not conciliate Sir Ralph, who, fetching men out of Scotland and filling the immense fortress as full as it would hold, joined Queen Margaret and the indifferent force she soon after landed with. Then was fought the battle of Hedgely Moor between Alnwick and the Cheviots. Out-numbered and out-manceuvred, the queen's generals, Somerset, Hungerford, and Roos, fled without striking a blow. Percy alone remained to face his foe, and fell where his cross still stands, in a wood by the Wooler road. His enigmatic dying speech, "I have saved the bird in my bosom," is a famous Northumbrian tradition, uttered as a note of thankfulness for having preserved to the last his loyalty to the Lancastrian house. The late earl's only son, now a penniless refugee of seventeen at the court of the Scottish king, is said to have been the only Percy left alive who could prove his descent from the ancient house, and stood between it and extinction. How he emerged from poverty and danger, was ultimately accepted by Edward, and restored to all the estates and honours of the Percies, cannot be told here. Warden of the Middle and East Marches, Bailiffe of Tynedale, Judiciary of the King's forests beyond

Trent, Constable of Newcastle, Bamburgh, and Dunstanburgh, and Commissioner of the Royal mines in the North, may be set down as a typical list of the honours and offices borne by the house of Percy as their normal appanage. It must be noted also that they still held large properties in Yorkshire, with the three residences of Leckonfield, Topcliffe, and Wressill, and a family mansion in York. This fourth earl held the family traditions, but deserted to the House of Lancaster on Bosworth field, and afterwards headed a force into Scotland, took a lead, though an unpopular one, in northern matters, and was finally murdered in loyal but unwilling attempts to collect the extortionate taxes levied by that grasping, clever, undesirable monarch Henry the Seventh.

His son, the fifth earl, was twelve at his father's death in 1490. At nineteen he commanded "the northern horse," raised by himself against Perkin Warbeck at Blackheath, and when of age assumed such gorgeous state that he was known as "The Magnificent." He astonished the northern gentry with his splendour, and delighted them with his feasts. At every function, royal and local, he outshone the best. The details of his trappings and his retinues are an education in mediæval millinery. He conducted the Princess Margaret to her royal husband of Scotland, and entertained her sumptuously at Alnwick, where she shot a buck in the park. This could only have led to one result with the mean, grasping king, who trumped up a charge, and mulcted his over-magnificent subject to the tune of £10,000 in the way of a fine, an enormous sum for those days.

With his northern horse he was in the van of victory at the battle of the Spurs. But like most of the English chivalry, his French campaign lost him the great glory of Flodden, where, however, his younger brother worthily represented the race. But Wolsey, under Henry the Eighth, had now set himself to humble the great nobles, and the proudest of all of them was soon in trouble and in prison. It is a long story; but crippled financially by extravagance, and broken and

soured by the invulnerable antagonism and persecution of the plebeian autocrat, the "magnificent earl" lost heart, and became a man broken, not only in fortune but in spirit. He shrank from all those Border responsibilities identified with the head of this race, and Northumbrians began to scorn the man who had once delighted them, while the contrast to his brother Thomas, a conspicuous hero of Flodden, who had spent his life in the Border passes, became the subject of irreverent minstrels. Once he roused himself and led a force into Scotland, but only to stir the jealousy of Dacre, who had occupied the position on the Border he had shrunk from. His son's partiality for Anne Boleyn was making further mischief at Court. Every expense too that could be thrust on him was seized upon in the king's name by Wolsey. In short, he was crushed by financial adversity, due, not to vulgar dissipation, but partly to the prodigal splendours of his youth and partly to the untiring fashion in which Wolsey hunted him to his ruin. He died a broken man in 1527 with £14 to his credit, while his funeral had to be paid for on the security of what remained of his plate. So complete had been the victory of the Great Minister, the "butcher's son," over the unfortunate earl, that his son and heir actually numbered one of the eight hundred persons who formed that arrogant cleric's household. This youth, the sixth earl, is known as "the unlucky." Reared softly at the Court, he became early enamoured of Anne Boleyn, and their troth was privately plighted about the time the king first began to ogle her. Her loss threw Percy into a serious illness, from which he never rightly recovered, being sickly all his life. He was afterwards married to a dowerless bride, a Talbot, under conditions of mutual dislike, while his impoverished estates were administered by Wolsey with rigid parsimony as regards the hapless owner. His very wedding festivities, says a family chronicler, were unworthy of a yeoman's son, and the young jarring couple were allowed fourteen shillings a week and four servants for housekeeping. So much of the revenue as did not stick in the hands of Wolsey's agents went to the Crown.

But the Percy name was great, and he was sent north as Warden General of the Marches. He had arrived at Alnwick in a litter, and the scorn of the Border barons for the sickly, gloomy, and London-reared stripling was loud, Percy though he was. He soon showed to their amazement that he was very much one. The Scots had recovered from the blow of Flodden and were raiding merrily. The English borderers were at feuds with one another and also raiding Durham, and even the earl's own brothers were in the thick of the fun. Halls, Redes, Charltons, Fosters, Hedleys, Milburns, Robsons, and a score more of less renowned septs are listed and numbered as on the war path, raiding and burning, while even Lysles, Erringtons, Swinburnes, and Shaftos, and the earl's two brothers, abandoning all decency and the traditions of the more responsible septs, joined in their indiscriminating forays. Though nipped by the keen air of the North, this frail, court-bred youth hunted them down and laid them wholesale by the heels, and strung them up at Alnwick by the dozen. But the sanguinary tide of Border war rolled back and forth till the half of the North rose in the *Pilgrimage of Grace*. The earl's brothers were in it, but the earl himself lay worn out and ill in Yorkshire with neither the wish nor the power to join. The failure was complete, the vengeance of the king in the northern dales frightful. The earl soon afterwards died without male issue, and long separated from his impossible wife. His next brother's son, the rightful heir, was an outlaw by his father's attainder, and the estates were vested in the Crown.

The protector Somerset restored the youth to his mother's property, and Queen Mary created him Earl of Northumberland with all its honours and estates. The return of a restored Percy created enthusiasm throughout the North; the son, too, of a regular hardy Border fighting Percy who had been out and fallen in the *Pilgrimage of Grace*; a martial, sporting, jovial Percy, not greatly gifted but much beloved. Through Mary's reign everything went well in the Catholic North. Border feuds went merrily on with the

Scots, and everybody was happy, except no doubt the women and children. Then came Elizabeth, and the North with most of its chieftains became objects of mistrust and, when possible, of royal plunder. Cecil hated the Percies, and put his own men into their places and worried them in every way. The earl in disgust threw up his northern offices, retired to Petworth, his Sussex property, and devoted himself to sport. Back in Yorkshire, hunting still, but wielding much influence and with frank sympathy for Mary Queen of Scots, who had lately passed through, he became an object of baseless but plausible suspicion. Court spies and officials were busy reporting the post-prandial utterances of the northern gentry, some of whom were disaffected, particularly Westmoreland, his fellow magnate on the Border, and especially his wife. Percy and his really noble wife had no serious designs on Government. They were suddenly thrust into a corner by a peremptory summons with others to London, which meant certain imprisonment. The horrors of the massacres following the *Pilgrimage of Grace* were fresh in the North, and it began to arm. The earl and his wife, pressed by their friends, and with the designs of Cecil only too obvious, had scarcely an alternative, and the upshot was the *Rising of the North*. How this failed is common history. How the earl and his wife were hunted through the wild moorlands of the North Tyne is Border history, and we shall be on their track later. It is a very long story. Northumberland, a refugee in Scotland that, as a nation, showed him great sympathy, was held as a possible hostage for Mary Queen of Scots by Murray, but Murray fell, and Mar and Morton had the earl a captive on Lochleven. In the end the Scottish regents, to the disgust of every honest Scotsman, sold him for £2000. Elizabeth played her cat-and-mouse game for a time, partly from constitutional hypocrisy and partly from a hitch in the Percy entail which made a transfer to her of the estates momentarily awkward; when this was cleared, she cut off the head of another brave and rather simple gentleman, in part hounded to hopeless



rebellion. Once again the northern dales ran with the blood of unresisting yeomen and peasants, both men and women, in the name of religion in which Gloriana took a stimulating personal interest. These little trifles belong to Border history, and are lightly dealt with by her many biographers. Thus fell the seventh earl, cheery to the last, and ready to talk of hawks and hounds almost at the foot of the scaffold. For a generation afterwards the Percy estates in the north of England suffered from the number of farms worked by widows and boys, so bloody was the vengeance of Elizabeth and Cecil.

I have already, however, carried the Percy story beyond the time when the Tudor policy of destroying the power of the great nobility had effectually severed the dominant Northumbrian house from its historical position on the Scottish march. The union of the Crowns following soon after, deprived the Border and its affairs of any further international significance, and the House of Percy, in any case, were less in evidence in Northumberland than either in the pre-Tudor or the Georgian days, when they once more became an active power in the now peaceful and progressive North.

Almost every one knows how the male succession failed, and in the eighteenth century a Smithson married the lady who afterwards became, and somewhat unexpectedly, the heiress, and took the name and honour of the Percies, which last by then had been carried by an heiress to the Seymours. This other heiress, the grandmother of that one who married a Smithson, was individually much more famous, in that she married her third husband, the Duke of Somerset, at the age of sixteen. Neither of the two fortunate gentlemen who had previously married the greatest heiress of her day, Lord Ogle and Mr. Thomas Thynne, lived a year, the latter being murdered. The homely name of Smithson in such a connection has provoked many a sally from Walpole's time to this. But Sir Hugh was the third baronet with ample Yorkshire estates and of an ancient yeomen family that had made a

fortune in trade. He became the first Duke of Northumberland. The Yorkshire Percy estates did not come with his wife, so the family interest was concentrated henceforth wholly on Northumberland, and in 1768, after two hundred years of more or less enforced absenteeism, Alnwick Castle in preference to Warkworth was permanently refitted, the vast neglected estates taken seriously in hand, and the Percies seated definitely again on their native soil.

At the brink of the ridge which here drops abruptly to the woody Aln, the ancient parish church is finely planted, a fitting outpost to the long array of castle towers rising in the immediate background. With a massive tower supported at each corner by buttresses, climbing almost to its embattled summit, the main features of the building, erected in the fourteenth century, are Perpendicular, though there are some scant remains of a Norman predecessor. Both nave and chancel are flanked by two side aisles, the octagonal pillars supporting the arcades of the latter being singularly graceful and profusely decorated. There are heraldic reminders of the Percies at many points, and some fine windows to a later duke, but no old mortuary tributes to the family such as one might expect to find at the very threshold of Alnwick castle. Sufficiently interesting, however, is the well-preserved effigy of a female lying beneath a decorated canopy, and thought to be the last de Vesci lady who played the chatelaine at Alnwick. There are a few unidentified effigies and some minor treasures of unknown date, such as invariably find their way to the light in all old churches covering the sites of still more ancient ones. There is much handsome woodwork too, and stained glass of more recent date, and many interesting features in the external masonry. But the general effect is full worthy of the site and its environments, while around it the dust of long-forgotten unrecorded Borderers lies thick beneath the sod of a level widespreading churchyard, and a forest of mortuary slabs or altar tombs displays the oft-recurring northern names of their more law-abiding descendants.

The duke's park, which spreads away westwards for some miles on either side of the buoyant streams of Aln, is as delightful a blend of art and nature as I have ever met within a walled enclosure. But the course of this wall must be something like ten miles running from the outskirts of Alnwick to the summit of the high moors at the back, which lead westward again to still higher and wilder ones. There is everything one looks for in the best park scenery of England; stately woods of beech and oak and ash threaded by winding walks and roads, with ample pastures browsed by herds of deer or picturesque Highland cattle. But there is a good deal more than this, for amid its whole length the Aln urges its bright streams through woody glens, where the forester for generations would seem to have been alert to stimulate the efforts of Nature without too conspicuously intruding his own. Tumbling over rocky channels, or gliding along pebbly reaches, the little river asks nothing of art, but nevertheless is no worse for such care as gives scope to the varied woodland that here clothes the steeps above it, or there keeps health and vigour in the noble trees that are scattered over the opposing slopes. Occasionally, some great Douglas pine or other exotic evergreen rises strangely among the oaks, the alders, or the stalwart limbs of the Northumbrian ash that guard the stream, and betimes some bank of flowering shrubs makes a patch of welcome and unexpected colour. And as you track the little river up its winding vale, for some two or three miles, these lower ridges of the demesne leap up to altogether loftier altitudes, and terminate in a background of wooded heights and open moorland that looks far away over the central vales of Northumberland to the distant Cheviot.

The remains of two once considerable abbeys give further distinction to the park; that of the Blessed Mary near the lower entrance, and Hulne Abbey which crowns the summit of a well-timbered slope two miles up the river. Of the former there is nothing now left but an extremely fine fifteenth-century turreted gate tower, bearing the arms of the



HUTTEN ABBEY



de Vesci, a lady of which family with her husband, Eustace Fitz John, founded the House in 1147. Snugly and picturesquely seated in a meadow near the river and sheltered by enfolding hills, its first possessors were a colony of Premonstratensian monks, one of whom may be seen standing in stone to-day in a niche on the tower. I do not know their story ; probably the near neighbourhood of the castle secured it from unpleasant and dramatic episodes, but a chronicle by one of their monks, or its copy, exists I believe in the British Museum, while the performances of the ubiquitous Robin Hood seem to have inspired another of them to poetic effort. Their particular treasure was the uncorrupted foot of Simon de Montfort, which they preserved in a silver case. Tradition credits it with some wonderful cures, though precisely why the flesh of that able but mundane partisan should have possessed such pious efficacy is not very obvious. Sacrilegious Alnwickian house-builders of past generations are responsible, I was told, for the disappearance of the Abbey. At any rate, we may be thankful that the noble old gateway tower still stands in such massive perfection, and bids fair, with the help of a more enlightened generation, to defy the ages. When I last saw it, the glory of a drooping September sun was streaming down the narrow vale over the rain-freshened verdure of the smooth mead, in which it stands out from a background of noble forest trees, and illuminating with roseate hues its warm red sandstone face. The cock pheasants were calling in the wood above, and a waterfall on the river beside it made soothing music. Altogether it was a peaceful and uplifting scene and abides with me.

Hulne Abbey, under any and all conditions, is a yet more engaging retreat. Far away in the depths of the chase, set high above the stream on a steep grassy hill, to which huge forest trees cling and wave their branches above its still high encircling walls, it is a place of much fascination. The walled enclosure, entered through a hoary turreted gateway, suggests not merely a monastery but a fortress, as well it may in a country where monks, like other men, lived in a state of war.

The interior must cover a full acre of ground, on which considerable portions of many of the old buildings are still standing. A single comparatively modern tower is somewhat of a blemish, but hard by it is another, built by that fourth Earl of Northumberland who was murdered in his attempts to enforce the exactions of his master, Henry the Seventh, in the north. A contemporary inscription in whimsical English and spelling to match extols the builder's worth, though at Bosworth field he had lost reputation for what looked like a sudden desertion of Richard at the crisis of the battle, and briefly eulogizes his lady, the daughter of "Sir William Harbirt right noble and hardy."

Much of the walls and five lancet windows of the church remain, the singularly narrow proportions of which—some 130 by 29 feet—strike one instantly. Close by, one is startled almost into an apology on turning a corner by coming suddenly on the life-size stone figure of a Carmelite friar—to which rigid fraternity the house belonged—kneeling on the grass at his devotions. Portions of the chapter house, and fragments of other buildings, with several carved figures and coffin lids, would make a long list of details, tedious to the reader. Many more perfect monuments of the monastic period, many infinitely more splendid, are to be found than this one. But for compactness, for suggestiveness, and for its absolute repose and charm of natural seclusion, I know nothing better, and I am sure I never myself felt quite so near the old monks as within the four rampart walls of this quiet hilltop monastery of Hulne. There are several accounts of the manner of its creation. But it seems that William de Vesci, of Alnwick, and Richard Gray, a brother Northumbrian, while on a crusade in the reign of Henry the Third, paid a visit of curiosity to the monks on Mount Carmel. Here they found one Ralph Fresborn, another Northumbrian, an old crusader recently turned monk, who appears to have made such an impression on them that they brought him home and set him up with a Carmelite order in an establishment of his own upon this spot, which he himself selected as reminding him of Mount

Carmel! whether he found the Christian Scots better neighbours than the Saracens one may not know. At any rate, Earl Percy, two hundred years later, as we do know, had to build a pele tower for the monks' defence, even Friar Fresborn's once embattled and still lofty walls not being proof against them.

A few of us, no doubt, come to Alnwick in retrospective mood to dream complacently of times we are thankful not to have lived in, and, incidentally, to admire the scenes which here so greatly help to stimulate one's fancies. But the visitors who chiefly galvanize the ancient town into weekly and monthly bursts of animation are bent wholly upon cattle and sheep, and in a minor degree upon grain. Alnwick is the most important country town in Northumberland, if we except Berwick, which holds most of a Scottish county in its commercial grasp, and is still ill-pleased at being no longer reckoned as the fourth estate of the British crown. The typical Northumbrian farmer, though smaller fry prevail in some parts, does not come to market in a donkey cart, nor on pony back, nor yet in a spring-cart or a rusty gig, but in a smart trap, or with a first-class season ticket, as the scale of his operations justifies, or occasionally on a young hunter. The good old dealing days when men pitted their wits and their judgment against one another and soothed the zest of combat by frequent libations are practically over. Stock are disposed of at periodical auction sales. Some elderly farmers of my acquaintance deplore this change which levels everybody and leaves the man endowed with that precious talent, sometimes inherited, sometimes laboriously acquired, for estimating to a fraction an animal's value and possibilities at no advantage over those not thus gifted. They declare that the young man of to-day has few opportunities for acquiring this old hall-mark to respect, that a hundred auctions get him no nearer to it, while the sporting aspect of a protracted bargain, this rubbing of wit against wit, this thinking one thing and protesting another with inscrutable countenance, seem to the ancients, or the shrewder of them, a great social



and intellectual loss to the farmer's life. Their sons no doubt hold differently, and feel that a load is lifted off them, and are quite content that the limited pleasures of the horse deal, which no properly constituted rural soul would part with, still remain to cheer their business cares.

This sort of talk, however, will not do ; we have not yet done with the Percies, for the towers of Warkworth, their second fortress, still confront us but a few miles away, and Warkworth is a place of high renown. The little town which its ruins dominate lies a mile from its own station, the next one to the south of Alnwick on the main line. It climbs up, while the castle crowns a slope above the Coquet which enfolds both in a loop, and is here sufficiently near its junction with the sea to give Warkworth a claim to consider itself a sea-side place. There is nothing of this, however, in the quite feudal-looking entry to the foot of the town by way of an ancient stone bridge, of two arches originally built in the fifteenth century, with a tower gateway of still earlier date commanding the further side of it. It spans the Coquet, too, that romantic and much-sung-of stream which here, within sound of the sea, still sweeps with broad, clear current over a gravelly bed, and looks all over the noted haunt that it is of those various types of the salmon tribe which the inland Northumbrian countryman conveniently groups under the generic name of "seafish." The town, with its long street ascending gradually to the castle, and its market cross, has a distinct flavour of ancient times, and is worthy of a name that to the ears of most people probably still carries some faint echo of the clash of arms, and, above all, it was the home of Hotspur. Sombre of tone, but for an occasional red-tiled roof, its small two-storied houses of solid stone, gable above gable, climb the gradual slope to the foot of the castle steep, wearing always the proper air of immemorial association with the noble ruin rising above their furthest limit that one would expect.

Warkworth castle, though not a great deal of the building we now see, existed as a fortress long before Edward the

ALNWICK CASTLE





Third granted it to the Percies. Its stormy record of Scottish repulse and capture, under successive Claverings ; its partial destruction by that long-lived Scottish scourge of Northumberland, William the Lion, its occupation by King John and Edward the First, are significant of its importance. The castle and Manor were given to that valiant Henry Percy who, it will be remembered, took such a lead in the battle of Neville's Cross, while the king was fighting at Crecy, and the grant was in lieu of salary for his services and expenses as Warden of the Marches. Both he and his son, the "parvus miles," made Warkworth their chief headquarters, and both, strange to relate, died here peacefully in their beds. It was from here, too, that Hotspur and his father, the first earl, flouted Henry of Bolingbroke, and down this long street, and over the predecessor of the present bridge, the former, with his eighteen hundred invincible archers, had marched to Homildon fight, and a little later to his death on Haytely field at Shrewsbury. Here, too, is laid the scene in the first part of Shakespeare's *Henry the Fourth*, where Hotspur's wife Kate tries to worm out of him the secret of those moody humours, and those restless nights, which led to the cataclysm at Shrewsbury and ended there for good.

"Thy spirit within thee has been so at war,  
 And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,  
 That beads of sweat hath stood upon thy brow,  
 Like bubbles in a late disturbed stream :  
 And in thy face strange motions have appeared,  
 Such as we see when men restrain their breath  
 On some great sudden haste. O, what portents are these ?  
 Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,  
 And I must know it, else he loves me not. . . .  
     Away ! Away ! you trifter (cries Hotspur) :  
         This is no world  
 To play with mamnets and to tilt with lips :  
 We must have bloody noses and cracked crowns,  
 And pass them current too."

While the second part of the play opens at Warkworth again, where the old earl, detained by a sickness—

feigned, so said his enemies—received the news of Hotspur's death.

It was after this that the earl started from Warkworth with several thousand men to avenge his son, but with means quite inadequate to so belated and formidable a venture, surrendered to the king at York, was tried and somewhat generously pardoned by Henry, only to rise later and meet the fate he certainly deserved. Warkworth was besieged during this second rising by Henry, with a large force, and though gallantly defended by one of the Cresswell's, was at last intimidated to a capitulation by Henry's big guns playing on the walls. This is said to be the earliest effective use of artillery in an English siege, though it was still almost as dangerous to its immediate friends as to its foes. One of these monsters was carried hence by sea later, and used by Prince Henry against Glyndwr at Aberystwith castle. It is worth noting, too, that John Hardinge, once Hotspur's page, and the well-known rhyming chronicler, was afterwards Constable of Warkworth.

The castle, like that of Alnwick, fell into decay in the time of the Tudors, and during the long absence of the Percies in the south. When the first duke reconstructed Alnwick, on the return of the family to the north, there seems to have been some hesitation as to which of the two castles should be made their headquarters, Alnwick being finally selected on account of its more suitable environment.

The castle enclosure, which stands finely on the summit of a steep above the Coquet, covers from one to two acres, and the lofty walls defining it are still fairly complete. The immense keep is thought to be the work of the first earl, in Edward the Third's time, and, as regards its exterior at any rate, is practically original and intact. It is a prodigiously imposing building of eight lofty clustered towers, in the form of a star with as many points, a narrower rectangular lantern tower rising some thirty feet above the centre. The interior, which was doubtless readapted in the fifteenth century, contains a fine banqueting-hall, with musicians'

gallery, and some notable windows, and both a general and a ladies' reception-room. Below are the large kitchens with their huge chimneys, and beneath again vaulted cellars, where it is said the cattle were kept when enemies were about, according to ordinary Border custom.

At the far end of the courtyard is the ancient barbican and gateway, of date long prior to the Percy ownership, and looking it. Here the couple who keep guard over the castle, and produce on demand the keys of the keep, inhabit cavernous and vaulted chambers, built by Robert Fitz-Roger in the reign of John. Among other buildings and fragments in the turf-clad courtyard is a tower of the same date, standing over the remains of a chapel, and surmounted by a curious bell-turret, known by the astounding name of Cradyfargus, anent which—the name, I mean—the antiquaries refuse even to theorize. Near this is the Lion tower, fairly perfect, and on its face the sculptured figure of that noble animal, wearing a collar inscribed with the crescent badge of the Percies, and their motto of "Esperance." Near to the base of this, lying on the grass, is a large round stone of some celebrity, and the subject of a legend of the buried-treasure type, which is not perhaps worthy of narration. The ample foundations, vaults, arches, and pillar bases of a considerable church make a great display on the turf, and represent the beginning and the end of the pious intentions of some former Percy; indeed, there are no less than three places of worship within the walls. The shells of towers at three of the four corner angles of the curtain walls complete all that it seems fitting to take note of here of this most inspiring monument of feudal and Border power.

But there is a little pilgrimage, and that by water, which we made a point of, for it not only belongs in a sense to the castle, but it leads to the most curious piece of mediæval handiwork to be found, probably, in all England. Intent on this, we hailed, as directed, the better half of the resolute dame, who does the honours of the castle, and descended the steep slope below in his company to a boat, moored to the

banks of the river. Ensconced therein, we were propelled up the clear, fast gliding, shallow current of the Coquet between fringes of pendant trees, with the shadow of the castle's towers quivering in our wake. The Northumbrian does not readily unbosom himself to the stranger, nor is he in the least like an Irishman, let us say. But I found our skipper to thaw quite readily, and to be a man worth knowing, and withal of resourceful imagination. It was late on in a dry season when I visited Warkworth, and the clear pebbly bottom of a river, that all my life I had heard so much of, and had so recently made acquaintance with in its lusty and beauteous youth, turned my thoughts and inquiries naturally to the salmon and their doings in the past season. Our boatman's report was wholly lugubrious, but in the previous year he declared with regretful fervour he could hardly row his fares up the river or get his oars through the water for the abundance of the fish—bull trout and salmon. The river, in short, was "stiff with them." After all, there is something of the Celt left even in Northumbria.

But there was no such interesting impediment to our pleasant and all too short progress on this occasion. For in ten minutes we were landed at the foot of a red freestone cliff overhung with verdure, and from the margin of the river were conducted up a dozen steps cut in the rock. At the head of this a round headed doorway leads us through a small seated porch into a cave twenty feet by seven, cunningly wrought into the form and semblance of a chapel some six centuries ago. At the east is a small altar with a recess behind it, while beneath a two-light window adjoining it is the rude and worn figure of a recumbent female, at whose feet a male figure watches, with his head resting on one hand and the other across his chest, the whole attitude eloquent of despair. The roof is beautifully vaulted with central bosses, and supported by short columns hewn out of the solid rock. Within again, and lighted by a carved window from the outer chapel, is an inner one of ruder design, and thought to be of slightly earlier date, but fitted with an altar, worn into the

semblance of a seat. A third chamber, supposed to have been a dormitory, opens from this with a wide aperture at the end looking up the river. Over the doorway of the inner chapel is a worn shield, on which may be just deciphered a cross, a crown, and a spear. Over that of the outer chapel is a Latin inscription, signifying, "My tears have been my meat day and night." Immediately beneath the cliff containing these unique remains of a pious recluse, and the memory of a reputed tragedy, is a monkish cell of hewn stone and much later date: a square building, now quite ruinous, but originally of two stories with adjacent outhouses, of which the remains may still be traced. This building, if standing by itself, would enjoy some notoriety, but as we know all about it from the Percy records, and it is of fifteenth-century date, it figures here rather as an accessory to the cavernous sanctuary above, which fairly exudes mystery and legend. Indeed, that weird age-worn image of a grief-tormented warrior hermit gazing at the dead lady in the heart of a free-stone cliff, and on the verge of a romantic stream, is surely a thing by itself; a spectacle, one would have thought, to sate the most exuberant beanfeaster. But it hasn't, for his northern equivalent has left his accursed name graven freely on the very innermost sanctuary, though he will do so no more. But the adjacent shrine shares, at any rate, the respect for the older one cherished by the Percies, since the particulars of its endowment, in cow pasture, fish, and other privileges, which they settled on its occupant to say masses in the rock-hewn sanctuary above, is preserved in their archives. I am not sure that I myself feel particularly grateful to an eighteenth-century rhymmer, even to an eminent divine who has earned everybody's gratitude as a collector, for putting the local legends of such a stirring relic as this into many pages of extremely common-place jingle. But Bishop Percy has constituted himself the literary patron of this sacred and romantic spot, and the local handbooks print the whole dozen or so pages of his metrical narrative *in extenso*. The excellent bishop has earned some well-deserved fame



by his zeal for anecdotes and for Border ballads. One must admit, however, that their incomparable spirit and racy vigour finds slight echo in their reverend editor's occasional paraphrases or supplementary poems, and one drops with a gasp from Kinmount Willie or Jock o' the Side to the "Hermit of Warkworth."

The bishop was, in fact, a southerner, the son of a grocer, and of a line of respectable tradesmen in Worcester and Bridgenorth. Going to Oxford he won a Fellowship, and held a college living in Northamptonshire for thirty years. While here his antiquarian tastes and studies resulted in the publication of the "Percy reliques," followed by other less enduring publications. He married his two daughters and only surviving children extremely well in the neighbourhood. Still, he is quite a personage in Northumbrian lore, though, after being Dean of Carlisle for a brief period, he proceeded to Ireland, where he held the bishopric of Dromore for the last thirty years of his life, and appears to have really lived in it, not in Bath or London, like so many of his Irish episcopal brethren. A venial foible of the bishop's was to connect himself by descent with the great Northumbrian house. He succeeded in doing this to his own entire satisfaction and that of a good natured or indifferent world in no mood to be critical, particularly when a *persona grata*, well placed and well married, was concerned. The experts, however, do not appear to have been wholly convinced. But Goldsmith introduced this aspirant for full Percy honours to the duke of his day, the Smithson one, who made him his chaplain and blessed him, and gave him every facility in his endeavours to shed further lustre and interest on those brave deeds of old in which the Percies were so much engaged.

But the old legend, anent the origin of the Hermitage, commemorated in such length of rhyme by the bishop Percy, runs thus wise.

One Bertram of Bothal Castle was enamoured of a fair daughter of the house of Widdrington named Isabel, who, after a not uncommon fashion of that time, and like another

damsel we shall hear of later, despatched a gorgeous casque to the love-sick youth, with the intimation that he must put it on and do something worthy of her love before she bestowed it upon him, or, in other words, to make as many fresh widows as possible before he made her a wife. Bertram was feasting with the Percies at Alnwick at the moment when the helmet arrived, and they jumped at the pretext for a raid over the Border. After considerable diversion there, young Bertram got his crown very badly cracked, and was carried to Wark Castle on Tweed. Hearing of his misfortune, the remorseful lady set out to make atonement by nursing the stricken hero. She was captured on the way, however, by another suitor, a Scottish noble, who carried her off to his castle. Bertram, as soon as he was able, set off with his brother in search of her, the two taking different directions. The former, in time, found his way to the abductor's fortress somewhere in the west, and as he drew near it under the shadow of night to take a preliminary survey of the situation, espied his lady love in the act of descending from a window by a ladder held by a youth dressed in Highland costume. Detecting the lady, as he thought, in the very act of faithlessness to himself he rushed forward, sword in hand, upon his unknown rival. As the weapon descended, and too late to hold his hand, the girl threw herself between them, and received a mortal wound in her breast. She had just strength enough to cry out that the supposed Highland youth was her lover's own brother before she expired. Her distracted murderer, in his agonies of self-reproach, thereupon withdrew himself from the world to the Hermitage at Warkworth, which he fashioned in the cliff above the Coquet with his own hands, and there we may see him still, in stone, watching in an attitude of penitence and remorse at the feet of his early love, whom, in the heat of blind fury, he had destroyed with his own hand.

The second legend is of later date, and tells how Hotspur's son, when a landless refugee in Scotland, found means to form a reciprocated attachment to a daughter of the Nevilles, the rival Marcher House on the western side to his own and his

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father's foe, and how they were secretly married at the Hermitage by the priest in charge. That they were openly married afterwards when young Percy had come to his own again is an historical fact. What truth there may be in the earlier business is not for me to say, but tradition is perhaps more suited to one's mood in a spot like this than hard fact.

### CHAPTER III

#### EMBLETON BAY

ON that larger and altogether more attractive half of the Northumbrian coast, stretching northward from Warkworth and Alnmouth, there are several villages which have quite recently awoke to find themselves, if not famous, at any rate much sought after by holiday-makers, and scarcely able to keep pace with the modest tide of their waxing popularity. For, save at Alnmouth, where two or three terraces of Victorian villas suggest, at any rate, his blighting finger at the edge of a not unpicturesque townlet, the jerry-builder appears to have gained but scant footing on this coast. Whether the landowners are too many for him, or whether the adamantine whinstone, that is the chief local building material, presents too solid terrors, I do not know; for a summer lodging-house calculated to stand a siege would obviously not pay good interest on the outlay. I am not prepared to say that the force of ancient habit is so strong that the Northumbrian still erects his dwellings with an eye on the Scottish border, but he keeps it, at any rate, on his heirs, and his handiwork is at least not likely to blow away; so the August visitors who affect this coast have mainly accommodated themselves to such adapted quarters as the modest stone tenements of fishing villages can provide. That these are held sufficiently adequate in the matter of comfort is evident from the annual competition for them, which is now quite brisk, and the invaders do not come only from Tyneside but sometimes from Yorkshire, and very occasionally from far countries, even London itself.

They are, after all, not a formidable host. Bamburgh, with its matchless castle and excellent golf course, squeezes in the most. Holy Island harbours a few score who are prepared to forswear the world for a season and its more definite diversions; while in the still smaller places to the north and south little companies of knowing pilgrims contrive to make themselves at home, and lead *al fresco* lives upon the glorious sands and rolling dunes that distinguish this invigorating and otherwise imposing coast. For this is not the unqualified sand and the unresisting shore of the East Anglian levels, but everywhere thrusts out cruel jagged reefs in defence of its curving sandy bays, and sometimes quite savage headlands lifted high above the deep, which, together with the many rocky islets out at sea, stir up the latter in tumultuous fashion when a wind sets on shore and make a brave sight. The water, too, is of such texture and colour as one only looks for on rock-bound coasts. It seems here to mingle in no way with the sand, or ever gather from it that yellow tinge which one associates with sandy shores, but, on the contrary, is radiant with transparent greens and blues such as surge around the coasts of Cornwall or Pembroke. Why this is I know not, unless it be that the sand, in colour a deeper gold than to the southward, is more gritty and has no mixture of mud, and that there is everywhere more rock.

All of these frequented seashore villages are within four miles of the main line. Embleton, the chief of the minor ones, if we may venture thus to classify it, is less than two from Christon Bank Station, and but half a mile from its own bay, which gives it such modest but deserved popularity as it enjoys. I planted myself here early in July before competition had commenced, not on account of its bay, delightful though it be, nor because I wished to play on its sands, but for strategical reasons, if the word be permissible. In any case, it is a very typical fragment of East Northumberland, and is eight miles north of Alnwick. If you travel there by road you will find yourself approaching it over gentle gradients through grass farms of rectangular fields and capacious stone

homesteads, and enjoying wide prospects to the westward of neighbouring hills and distant mountains. Embleton is merely a great sea-coast parish, with two picturesque outlying fishing hamlets, set near the rocky horns of its capacious bay; but it enjoys some distinction, on several accounts. It possesses, for one thing, an interesting and ancient church, not so common a property in war-wracked Northumbria as in Suffolk or Northamptonshire, and one of the three or four pele tower vicarages of the county. These two, the church and vicarage, stand adjacent within a generous and bowery sanctuary, while a tall screen of elm and ash trees shut them off from, perhaps, the ugliest village, *qua* village, in rural Northumberland—at any rate, the ugliest I have seen. But this, after all, is only a matter of a single street, extending, perhaps, for a single furlong, which is really of little consequence, as one does not go North for village architecture, though here and there, as we shall see, one is pleasantly surprised. Many Northumbrian villages, again, lie handy to a stone quarry, or a small coal mine, of no consequence in the landscape, but which set a social tone wholly adverse to an æsthetic atmosphere. The delver in coal or stone, in the North at any rate, prefers a greyhound and a beefsteak, to roses, hollyhocks and whitewash, and there is a small quarry, nay two, adjacent to the village whose half hundred or so employees would be quite sufficient, I imagine, to obscure such impulse to homely grace as the agricultural labourer, even in Northumberland, is possessed of. The Embleton quarryman would appear, at any rate, to have little taste for domestic joys, if we may judge by the constancy with which he repairs in force, during his idle hours, to a commanding position on the village street, and there discourses interminably of unprofitable nothings, often far into the night, and always in accents neither soft nor low. I must not be unjust, even to the appearance of a place where I have spent so many pleasant weeks, and to which many discriminating folk, other than natives, are devoted; for, after all, it is only this heart, this interior of Embleton,

that is so defiantly unlovely and austere. For when you have mounted the short ascent to the rear of the village, and turned your back on the unprepossessing interlude, you will understand why it amounts to nothing in the eyes of the faithful. These last, as a matter of fact, mostly quarter themselves on this same ridge, where local enterprise has provided substantially, if not æsthetically, for their entertainment. For here is a most delightful seaward outlook, a brief slope of green fields, and beyond, long ranges of waving dunes. Nor are these thinly clad with pale and straggling bents, but, waist deep in bracken, and wrought by the winds of former days into fantastic shapes, rise to quite imposing heights. Between the fern-clad hills you may see the waves curling and spouting on the ragged reefs of whinstone that crane far out into the deep, or falling on carpets of clean sand and of a ruddier gold than any known to me. But the pride of Embleton bay lies in its southern horn two miles away; for here an upstanding promontory of black cliff, leaping out two furlongs seaward, carries on its spacious summit the still ample and lofty ruins of Dunstanburgh castle, which, for dignity of pose, shares with Bamburgh and Harlech a proud pre-eminence among our mediæval sea-coast fortresses.

The barony of Embleton was quite an important Northumbrian fief in the Middle Ages. Simon de Montfort once held it, and was apparently a frequent visitor, and long remembered in the county. Indeed, it was his neighbour, de Vesci of Alnwick, who brought his foot back to Alnwick Abbey after his death at the battle of Evesham. Later on, Henry the Third gave Embleton to his younger son, Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, to whom succeeded Thomas of the same, who built Dunstanburgh castle. Bailiff's accounts, and other records of the barony from this time, are extant, and shed much light on the social and economic condition of a northern country-side at that remote period, as well as at later ones. One finds, for instance, two-thirds of the houses, and a mill in Embleton, burned by the Scots, in Edward the

First's time, while after his son's disaster at Bannockburn, still greater damage is done, and the rent roll woefully depreciated. Wheat is at a shilling a bushel, a very stiff price indeed, and equal to the labour of a man for twelve days. On this account, perhaps, one finds the bailiff employing hands to weed it; monstrous high farming, one might think, for the fourteenth century. The cost of shoeing a horse all round is five shillings, an enormous sum, being the price of sixty days' labour! Messengers are constantly going back and forth to the lord in the South, with news of the state of the Scottish temper and intentions. The bailiff goes, too, on business, and all their travelling expenses are carefully entered. An auditor, generally a knight, comes down yearly, and puts up in the Royal house at Embleton, receiving fifteen shillings for his five days' work and expenses. The lord also keeps a boat, that brings him in fifty shillings a year for carrying goods along the shore for his tenants. Licences to brew, and of course the corn mills, are another source of revenue, while the names and precise rent of each tenant are duly recorded. Oxen and cows are purchased at six to four shillings, ewes at one shilling, while one hundred and forty of these last are used as milkers.

John of Gaunt steps into the barony by marriage, and builds largely at Dunstanburgh. The property is worth, roughly, £150 a year, and in the fifteenth century it is let to a middleman for £100, a special clause being inserted to protect the head tenant against responsibility for damage done by the Scots. Rents went down in this century owing to the continuous Scottish wars. Henry the Sixth, who succeeded to the barony, writes complaining that a caracute formerly worth twenty-two shillings is now only worth sixteen shillings, and urges his factors to put rents up again, but they reply, "It is impossible." Scotsmen were continually settling in Northumberland, and as their countrymen were responsible for the depression in land it is proposed to tax these immigrants by way of compensation. A number of settlers from the extreme south, too, seem to have been imported, and they



complain that they have come three hundred miles for their betterment, but found very much the reverse. One may well fancy the rustic of Berks or Bucks getting nostalgia in the Northumberland of that day! Large remissions of even reduced rents became necessary when the wars of the Roses were added to the distress of the Border forays. Those men who had specie hid it in holes, and then it often happened that they got killed, and the secret died with them. These small hordes have frequently been unearthed by succeeding generations. The bailiffs at the time were often men of good family who acted as captains in Border wars, the muster of this particular barony being about fifty men. There were disputes, too, about digging for coal between the tenantry and the Crown bailiffs, besides other matters, and the constable of the castle, having now no concern with either, and probably not much to do in peace time, sides with the people, and there is some skirmishing, one party, among other little diversions, making the hay crop and the other carrying it. It is curious to read that in the sixteenth century nearly all the timber had been wasted away by reckless usage, and also that the sportsmen of the country killed the baronial game, so the bailiff complains, as if it were their own. About 1730 the old intricate system of common tillage without enclosures and the complicated network of inconveniently scattered holdings and grazing rights and commonage were abolished by the consent of the chief tenants, and the parish divided into large holdings and fenced somewhat as it is to-day. I have ventured these brief notes, not because this locality is in such particulars an exceptional one, but for the simple reason that it will serve as well as any other to illustrate some features of old Border-life, which last in the narration usually resolves itself into an epic of martial deeds.

Embleton church is among those of distinction in a country where building of any kind in the Middle Ages, except for personal security, was not an encouraging venture. Small portions of an earlier Norman church are embodied in the present one, which was raised, or partly so, about the year

1200, and somewhat amplified more than a century later, when the tower was rebuilt and the aisles enlarged. It consists to-day of tower, nave, and side aisles, with a modern chancel on the site of an old one. The arches of the nave are pointed, and spring from graceful octagonal piers. Their hood mouldings display the nail-head ornament, and terminate on the north side in human heads, thought to be original, while above is a clear-story carrying three-light windows. In the north-east of the nave is a small chauntry, now occupied as a family pew. The windows of the former, restored apparently on the old models, are not of especial interest. The stained-glass windows in the modern chancel are by Kempe, and dedicated to the memory of that distinguished statesman, the late Sir George Grey, of Falloden, which estate, lying partly in the parish, is now owned and occupied by Viscount Grey of Falloden. The memorials on the walls of chancel and nave mainly relate to the Greys of Falloden, and the Crasters of Craster, the latter being owners of property and a pele tower manor-house in the parish time out of mind.

The hoary and massive porch on the south side is entered through an obtusely arched doorway surmounted by the figure of an angel with outspread wings, and above it, again, one of those decorated cavities for the reception of an image that have now been tenantless for so many centuries. In the porch itself are several floreated and symbolically inscribed grave covers set upright in the walls. The tower of native whinstone of three stages, and carrying curiously wrought battlements surmounted by crocketed pinnacles, is distinctly imposing, rising amid its girdle of trees in this wide open and somewhat woodless playground of the winds.

The vicarage adjoining the churchyard, and within the same harbourage of trees, has grown out from the massive pele tower, where in olden days the ex-Fellow of Merton, who held the living, and many no doubt of his neighbours, could attempt defiance of the marauding Scots. This rectangular clerical fortress, thickly hooded with ivy and measuring some

forty by twenty feet, is of three stories with a crenellated battlement. The lower story is a basement with vaulted roof, and it may be assumed for a certainty that the entrance was originally on the first floor, reached by a movable ladder, such being the essence, one may say, of the pele-tower system. It was of itself an ample and roomy parsonage as things went then, but looks a strange and belated neighbour now to the cheerful and more or less modern habitation tacked on it. The connection between Embleton and Merton has always been peculiarly intimate and interesting, and none the less so for the early struggles of the college to preserve it from the unscrupulous greed of mediæval magnates.

Bestowed together with the chapel of Rock on the Warden and Fellows of Merton in 1274, "for the support of their scholars and the increase of their numbers," by Edmund, younger son of Henry the Third, the very donor endeavoured soon afterwards to repudiate his gift, and appointed a man of his own to the first vacancy in the teeth of the college nominee. The prompt resistance of Merton to so powerful a shuffler, and the tenacity with which they battled for their property for sixty years, should entitle those strenuous dons of old to the undying gratitude of their successors, which no doubt they possess to the full, while the conflict is regarded, I believe, with much interest by students of Church history, and may be briefly related without, I hope, trying the lay reader's patience too greatly.

Earl Edmund then, owner at the time of the barony of Embleton, appointed his man, and so did Merton, both, strangely enough, rejoicing in the name of Fileby. Upon this there was a great to do; the Bishop of Durham interfered on behalf of the college, and after much trouble the Merton Fileby was instituted. Edmund's son, the famous Earl Thomas of Lancaster, revived forty years later his father's old claim at the first vacancy. The struggle now became much keener. Merton sent their proctor to the north, but a terrorized jury of Northumbrian parsons, more frightened even of the earl's bailiff, Thomas Galoun, than of the earl,

tamely acquiesced in his candidate, one Peter de Dene. Even the Warden of Merton shrank from presenting, though the common people seem to have been on the side of the college. So the intruding Peter was inducted, though he had been and still was a pluralist on a generous scale with another living and a canonry, besides being chancellor and bishop's chaplain at York. After his patron's execution in 1322 his good fortune made him an object of persecution, so he bestowed his accumulated goods and himself on St. Augustine's monastery at Canterbury, where both, for his talents were considerable, were welcome. Tiring after a while of such seclusion, and the abbot refusing to release either his person or his goods, he conveyed the latter and such plate as he could carry through a cellar door and over the convent wall by the help of outside friends with ladders, gaining thereby his freedom. But this was only temporary. The monastic hue and cry was raised, and he was shortly run to earth and discovered rolled up in a bundle of canvas at a country house in which he had taken refuge. The recalcitrant monk was brought back with ignominy, locked up, and treated to a severe course of discipline. This seems to have been unjust, for his contention that his initial vows were conditional was recognized by the Pope, who issued a bull in his favour. The ex-vicar of Embleton, however, survived his troubles but a short time, though immortalized in a stained-glass window in York Minister, where he appears in full length in the act, apparently, of bestowing his benediction on two attendant warriors encased in chain mail.

Merton, however, had all this time been pressing forward legal proceedings, which in 1327 terminated in their favour, Edward the Third ordering the Bishop of Durham to respect the presentation of the warden. This writ was issued, pending a claim of the king himself, on the pretext that Earl Edmund had bestowed the living without a royal licence. There was then another great hubbub. The college authorities protested with all their might, and the matter was eventually settled by the payment of a fine, which was no doubt the sole object

for which His Majesty had raised the issue, though he insisted, probably for the sake of appearances, on retaining the first presentation. To make all things safe after this, the Papal recognition of Merton's claims was formally secured, as well as that of the Bishop of Durham. The living was now converted from a rectory to a vicarage, the college henceforth retaining the great tithe which they hold to-day. But even now there was not to be peace for the unfortunate fellows of Merton. In 1340 Henry of Lancaster, as holder of the barony of Embleton, seized the first opportunity to put one of his clerks into the living. Down again post haste came the warden's proctor, and standing in the church porch, proceeded to read out his charter of possession. Taking the key in his hand, and addressing the crowd that had collected, among whom was a lawyer, he cried repeatedly in a loud voice, "Here I take corporal possession of this church of Embleton." Then the earl's bailiff, the old obnoxious Thomas Galoun, whose voluminous accounts are still extant, came upon the scene with an armed following, and rudely bade the college proctor to evacuate not only the church precincts, but Embleton itself, before nightfall, a threat the unfortunate collegian felt bound to respect "in great anguish of body and fear of death." The college now formally presented their own man, William de Humberstan, in opposition to the tyrannical earl's clerk, John de Bredon, in possession. But even the Bishop of Durham, on being appealed to, proved faint-hearted. The Archbishop was next invoked, and between them enough seems to have been done to, at any rate, scare John de Bredon out of the vicarage, upon which the earl immediately nominated one Robert of Walkyngton in his place. These flagrant proceedings were too much even for those days. The matter ended by the earl giving up all claim in consideration of the more than substantial sum of £400, which was what he was probably after, and let us hope he paid Thomas Galoun a handsome commission. With the exception of a little breeze with the Pope in 1370, whose nominee, legally instituted under special circumstances,

annexed the great tithe, and another with one of the Nevilles, who seized everything in a fit of exuberance, the Warden and Fellows of Merton thenceforward enjoyed Embleton in peace, save, of course, for the Scots, who, if they respected the sacred buildings, respected none of its accessories, human or material.

So much for this curious story. No wonder the ancient Oxford House regards its links with the parish of Embleton as closer than common, and I should hope every Fellow of Merton considers it his duty to make at least one pilgrimage in his life to this leafy sanctuary and its pele-tower parsonage, so conspicuously seated amid the sweeping pastures by the wild Northumbrian shore. But it would be worse than unpardonable so to forget the present and lose one's self in ancient history, as to turn out of the pleasant precincts of Embleton church without a word of the most distinguished divine that has probably ever occupied its pulpit. To all my readers Bishop Creighton's name will, I should hope, be fresh. Some, I dare say, have read his life, and many things about modern Embleton contained therein that I have neither the right nor the occasion to set down here. One feels justified, however, if justification were needed, for dwelling so long on this little bit of local history by the later distinction that the place has acquired through its connection with so famous a Churchman and so eminent and delightful a historian.

Summer comes to East Northumberland with tardy steps, and Spring, the poet Thomson, who hailed from close to the Northumbrian Border, would surely never have invoked as a "gentle and aethereal minstrel," had he remained at home and written of it beneath the north side of the Cheviots instead of the Marlborough downs. He would probably not have brought himself to sing of the first of the seasons at all, but have begun with summer, whose suns shine here with at least the radiance of those of the south and, of course, some thirty hours a month longer. But even hereabouts the sunshine is scarcely sensuous, if invigorating, nor is this a rainy coast. Even in this July, when friends arrived at its

close, quite exhausted with the continuous heat of the far South, and with a tale of railway journeys well-nigh unbearable, the air up here had been so keen that I was quite thankful my days had been active ones, and should have often had a fire at nights, but for a weak-minded dread of my landlady's scorn. Autumn is the period when East Northumberland comes out, and challenges comparisons with geographically more favoured climes. And winter, I am assured, has no particular terrors. But the spring and its east winds even the hardy hind speaks of with unqualified respect, and the more sensitive with anathema. One can well fancy it whistling over the grey sea and smiting the stone villages and farmhouses set on the crest of the long swell that slopes gently inland, with pitiless breath. Indeed, I should have no occasion for fancy or for local tales, since I myself in times remote spent two or three springs very much in the company of the elements on this same coast-line, a score or two miles yet further north. But, then, what reckes one-and-twenty of an east wind!

I have said that the prospect of Dunstanburgh Castle, rising grim and rugged amid its splendid solitude of cliff and sky and sea, would give Embleton something to live for if it had nothing else. No road leads to the ruins from anywhere, which is all in its favour. The way thither lies by the shore, and you may pursue it on the firm sands themselves, or behind the barrier of fern-clad dunes they have cast up by a winding track over the links—a general term this last, by the way, that the southern golfer may be surprised to hear, is very much older than the sport which, for obvious reasons, became identified with it. Long before reaching the foot of the castle steep the smooth sands come to a violent end in a waste of jagged reef and a chaos of detached rocks, where the waves with but slight encouragement growl ominously. One huge fragment of limestone, lying partly beyond their reach, enjoys a deserved notoriety for its striking resemblance to the wreckage of some man-made structure. A once impassable narrow marsh, now drained to a meadow, meets

this wave-washed litter of rocks in the angle, which forms in fact a cove, whence a black perpendicular cliff a hundred feet in height shoots far out to sea. Where it meets dry land just above us, the precipitous rock changes to a grassy slope still higher and scarcely less steep, which, curving inland round the base of the promontory, makes for defence upon the landward side. Here, looking imposingly down from the summit of the escarpment, is the Lilburn tower, with its massive corner turrets and hundred feet of six-foot walls, not greatly shattered by the storms of as many hundred years, while marshalled around its base on the slope are a group of slender statuesque basaltic crags, ten to fifteen feet high, and curiously suggestive of a row of gigantic warriors guarding the steep.

On the top of the promontory ten acres of sward, gently trending towards its wave-washed point, forms the interior of this once immense fortress, of which some five hundred yards of curtain wall are still standing in whole or part. The great original gateway, erected by Thomas of Lancaster, surmounted by two stories and flanked by lofty towers, faces the southerly of the two landward sides. A couple more considerable towers and a smaller one yet lift their heads bravely at other points of the same still almost perfect wall on the two sides fronting the sea. The northern side is un-walled, as it falls sheer into the water for the space, at high tide, of some two hundred and fifty yards, and from the height, as I have said, of a hundred feet. Here, as the promontory begins to dip travelling seaward, and the high grassy plateau, dropping of a sudden to expanding sweeps and terraces of basaltic rock on which the open sea breaks fiercely, the curtain wall is carried across to meet the further point of the landward wall, just where it is guarded by the furthest tower. This was called after Henry the Sixth's queen, Margaret, who landed and probably stopped here just before the battle of Hedgely Moor, where Ralph Percy, then the occupant of this castle, it may be remembered, fell in her cause "with the bird in his bosom." Just beneath this tower



the sea draws near again, and, running up a narrow chasm in the rocks, could carry a boat in calm weather under the very walls, suggesting all kinds of dramatic possibilities to the imagination. But, after all, one must leave it to the artist's pen or brush to give the reader some idea of the pose of Dunstanburgh. Turner and many other artists of note have depicted it, while Mr. Freeman declared it to surpass all other northern castles in the grandeur of its site. The north-east winds hurl the waves against its basalt crags with prodigious fury, flinging the scud and foam all over its many-acred interior, uplifted though that be, and driving the salt spray high against its much-enduring towers. I have been privileged to see it once, thus smitten from that quarter by an autumn storm, the rugged towers lying darkly piled against a gloomy sky upon the black cliffs, and the waves shaking their angry crest above the highest ledges, and sweeping inland in blinding blizzards of spray. An old friend and whilom vicar of Embleton pointed out to me a spot, at least two hundred yards within the castle precincts, where he was once struck by the scattered crest of a wave driven on the gale, and drenched to the skin. But that particular day of our pilgrimage was of a far different kind indeed. The sun was benignant, the seas were still but for an uneasy growling under the castle cliffs that no elemental serenity seems wholly to appease. We lay on their edge where no de Montfort nor John of Gaunt had need of the mason's help against a foe, and watched the green water a hundred feet below sweeping over transparent pebbly depths, and forcing itself through a tunnel at the base of the cliff that some freak of nature had formed for the chaunting of a perpetual dirge. Leland was here, of course, and remarks in his curt fashion, "Dunstanborough is hard on the se shore, it stondeth on a hy stone rok, the castle is more than halfe a mile in compace and there hath bene great building in it." So there had, and the foundations of the interior buildings and somewhat more may yet be seen. We have already told how de Montfort saw fit to acquire the barony of Embleton, of which Dunstanburgh

was then but the natural rock fortress, with traces, it is believed, of ancient occupation. But neither de Montfort nor his successor, Edmund of Lancaster, saw cause to build and entrench themselves upon it. The latter's son, however, Earl of Lancaster, Leicester and Derby, who so harried the Warden and Fellows of Merton, found an excellent reason, and began quarrying stone for the purpose in May, 1313. Dunstanburgh is in one sense unique in story, for it is the only border castle not erected against the Scots, nor did it even figure much in Scottish wars like those around and behind it. Thomas of Lancaster, in fact, erected it rather for his own security and greater influence as an opponent of his hapless sovereign, Edward the Second, whose favourite, Gaveston, he had recently put to death. He not only held aloof from Bannockburn, but is said to have actually jeered at the defeated monarch, as on his homeward way he passed beneath the walls of the earl's castle at Pontefract. Our old friends, William Galoun, in his character of steward and political henchman, and the intruding vicar of Embleton, Peter le Dene, as the donor of a pair of cart-horses, busied themselves in the work. The earl was fond of pageantry, and seems to have had an imagination. It is said he was enamoured of Arthurian lore, and had dreams of rock-girt Dunstanburgh becoming under his inspiring touch a kind of Joyeuse Garde. But the noble gate-house (the Dungeon tower) was the only portion that this magnificent individual was able to complete before the injured king turned the tables on him, and cut his head off in front of his own gate at Pontefract. After a period of royal constables, during which more or less building went forward, Henry, Duke of Lancaster, had possession, and put more masons to work; but in 1368, when John of Gaunt comes on the scene, both as owner and occasional visitor, substantial additions as well as repairs were executed, and the entire work, both what we see and what we don't see to-day, completed. The Galoun family, who were still stewards in 1382, seem to have contracted habits of laxity or presumption, after the way of old retainers.

For we find John of Gaunt breathing vengeance on his underling for keeping the castle workmen out of their pay and being himself in arrears. The fortress must have taken some part in Border wars, if only as a refuge, but it remains curiously in the background. In the wars of the Roses, however, it was besieged in 1461 by a Yorkist army of 10,000 men for seventeen days. Percies had been constables for some time, and Dunstanburgh surrendered on condition of its retention by that Ralph Percy who afterwards went back to his old allegiance, and fell at St. Albans. After the battle of Hexham, two years later, the castle was carried by storm, its then captain, John Gosse, beheaded, and its captor, the Earl of Warwick, celebrated the feast of St. John the Baptist within its walls. This practically ended its martial career. It had no shelter for ships, and was unavailable for naval enterprise against the Scots. By the time of Henry the Eighth some of its lead roofing was already being used for the official building at Embleton, always the beginning of the end of a feudal castle. Elizabeth's commissioners condemned its already despoiled walls as an unprofitable object of expenditure. The inglorious function of supplying the neighbourhood with building-stone soon overtook it, and we may be thankful to the splendid workmanship of Thomas of Lancaster's builders that so much is left to us. For it is held by archæologists, as a matter of interest, that these earlier buildings have outlived the later ones of John of Gaunt, and have defied, with much success, both the hand of Time and the pick of the despoiler. It has passed through several hands since James the First sold it, but none have ever felt an impulse to adapt or restore its crumbling walls, or to establish themselves on this surf-beaten but ample promontory, with renovations of either Tudor, Jacobean, or Victorian construction. "Dunstanburgh abides," to again quote Mr. Freeman, "as a castle should abide, in all the majesty of a shattered ruin."

A walk of a mile or so southward from the castle over grassy slopes and along the edge of dark beds of whinstone,



DUNSTANBURGH CASTLE



upon which even a smooth sea grumbles fretfully, brings one to a small gash in the rocky shore, guarded by a couplet of islets. Here upon either steep bank of this rude trough, into which a brook babbles, is set the fishing village of Craster, a type of several others on the Northumbrian coast. Substantial stone cottages, roofed with red tile or slate, firmly planted on long-trodden irregular platforms, look at each other but a stone's throw apart across the narrow gully. The summer sea heaves gently up the little cove, slightly lifting on its way an anchored boat or two, and breaking on a diminutive pebbly beach, where other brightly painted cobbles and a litter of nets and fishing accessories make a businesslike if restful picture. The two hundred or so individuals who occupy this eminently picturesque and wave-washed hamlet, like those of others on the coast, have no traffic to speak of with the hinds and bondagers and day-labourers who till the large farms that lie behind. They neither marry nor are given in marriage with them. Even their rendering of the Northumbrian speech is slightly different, and is pitched in a somewhat softer key. Their isolation from the landsman is tolerably complete till they make their final voyage to the distant cemetery of Embleton, which has succeeded the crowded churchyard, where farmer and quarryman, fisherman and hind, have at length to dispense with time-honoured cleavages and all lie down together. Alien steam-trawlers, however, have much injured the fisherman of late, and occasionally he finds it necessary to make up the deficiency thus caused by uncongenial work in a quarry. The fisherman, in his hours of ease, which cannot be many, stands with his hands deep in his fob pockets and his back against a wall, surveying his native element, engaged, no doubt—and well qualified to do so—in contemplation of the secret of its intentions and of its recent behaviour as it concerns himself. This pose of his, the more so perhaps from being myself so little of a mariner, always fills me with awe and a sense of inferiority to a rugged individual who may not even be able to read or write, though that is quite irrelevant. His knowledge

is that of mysteries, of vast skies and seas and depths that appeal to any one, though commonplace enough to him, and that no knowledge of the dry earth, or of men and women, or of books, get one any nearer. I have felt the same, though by no means at such a respectful distance from it, in the company of backwoodsmen to whom absolute illiteracy is a positive gain. Some similar respect should surely animate the laymen in the presence of the despised labourer, that poorly paid (except in Northumberland) tiller of the soil whose accomplishments are, or were, so many, and whose knowledge of the earth is so intimate. But the layman does not generally know enough to appreciate him in this town-ridden country, and rates him as the lowest of respectable humanity, and always below a man who spends his days lifting a lever up and down, or twitching a bolt backwards and forwards, and his evenings at a third-rate music hall. Nay, more, if he have himself some acquaintance with hedge-row flowers, he is almost inclined to rate himself higher as a countryman than the inarticulate aboriginal steeped in the secret of a thousand visible things that to the specialist of the hedgerow are meaningless superfluities. But if the coast fisherman holds to the motto that it is "better to marry over the midden," there is no sign here of physical deterioration; indeed, how could a degenerate face the North Sea? The fisherman, however, will court along the coast if not in shore, and bring his wife home in a boat, which, no doubt, saves the situation. Family nomenclature is as circumscribed as in a Merionethshire hamlet, nay, more so, the two patronymics of Archbold and Simpson absorbing, I am told, nearly the whole population of Craster. The green sweep of turf-clad whinstone, known as Craster Heugh, swells gently upwards behind the village to the traces of a British camp, and on a fine Sunday the sea-going Northumbrian of either sex and every age may be seen displaying their finery on its broad sunny slope beyond the reach of the splash of the sea, but still with an eye on it; domestic groups, where embryo mariners roll on the turf, and lovers sit clasped in unabashed embrace, while

the ancient salt still ranges with his glass the watery wastes he will no more adventure. To get much social change out of the Northumbrian fisherman, or win his confidence, is an achievement that is said to be only possible after about two years of continual residence, and the exercise of more than ordinary tact.

The manor-house of the township, Craster Tower, lies a short mile inland, pleasantly embowered in protecting woods of elm and ash and oak. Its interest lies in the large battlemented pele tower, which still so conspicuously forms the back portion of the house that was built out from it in later times. The Craster family, moreover, have been seated here, as already mentioned, with a continuity now rare in England. The tower seems to have been built about 1415, a period of great Scottish activity and much tower raising. But the original Craster was in possession of the manor of that name two hundred and fifty years before then, and Crasters are there still.

A mile away another relic of the pele-tower period survives in a farm house known as Proctor's Stead, formerly Dunstan Tower, and held from the thirteenth till the close of the seventeenth century by the Wetwangs, armigers of small estate. Duns Scotus, the celebrated fourteenth-century schoolman, is firmly held by Northumbrians to have lived here. The Scots also claim him, but the others would seem to have some advantage in the fact of his being a Merton man.

It would be pleasant, if space permitted, to follow the rugged curving coast to Alnmouth, noting by the way the fine basaltic columnar rocks at Cullernose, passing the well-wooded parklands of Howick, Lord Grey's seat, and the little fishing hamlet of Boulmer, a famous old-time haunt of smugglers acting in concert with the lawless horsemen of the Border dales, and much celebrated in Wilson's tales of the Border. Boulmer has all the picturesque character and the same social and architectural qualities as Craster, and, indeed, the same number of souls, just two-thirds of whom, I am told, are Stephensons or Stantons. Making for the same



point by the shore road, the pilgrim in this unsheltered land would find himself anon among grateful avenues of ash and oak and beech, the fringe, in short, of the Howick woodlands. He would pass through the village of Long Houghton, which boasts an extremely interesting early Norman church, enclosing a good deal of a still earlier building. He would also pass through Lesbury, one of the prettier villages of Northumberland; for its one-storied freestone cottages are pleasantly disposed among roomy gardens, not only suggesting a watchful eye in their erection, but happily disposed along the brink of a wooded dene, through which the Aln tumbles under the arched stone bridge by which the highway spans it. But this is almost under the shadow of Alnwick on the one hand, and within sight of the tidal reaches of Alnmouth on the other, and it will profit little to pursue this mere enumeration of pleasant places in which we may not linger.

A little trout stream, known as the Embleton burn, born somewhere up in the inland moors, cuts its tortuous way through the wide low-lying grass lands of the old barony, burying itself in woody denes and hurrying over rocky channels, and retaining the spirit of its moorish origin till it slips over the sands at the very centre of the bay. This, indeed, is the way of all these burns that run through this Northumbrian low country in such numbers to the sea. They might well sulk amid the ox-pastures and wheat fields, and degenerate into weedy sluggish East Anglian drains, the haunt of eels and bream. But they choose the better part, and urge their bright way over mossy rocks and stony shallow, holding their own store of small sweet trout till they actually meet the sea. A foot or two beneath the clean sand, near the very centre of Embleton bay, there lies a rock whose situation has now happily been fixed by measurement, as it is only uncovered at long intervals by the wash of the sea, and then by the same movement again buried. The interest attaching to it is very great; for not long since, while exposed to view, some rude lettering was noticed thereon which upon being cleaned revealed the famous name of "Andrea Barton"

in obviously sixteenth-century characters. Now Andrea, or Andrew Barton, was the most famous sea captain of the Scotland of his day, which was that of Flodden. He was the most brilliant mariner and daring rover of that new navy which James the Fourth was striving to create at the dawn, as it then seemed, of a new prosperity and civilization for the northern kingdom so soon to be quenched in three hours of a summer day and a succeeding century of gloom. But the name of Andrew Barton means more than this, for his death in a sea fight off this coast was one of the two or three pretexts upon which James the Fourth fought Flodden. He was in some sort a Scottish "Drake," half naval officer, half pirate, and had unpleasantly surprised the English on an element where Scotland had hitherto counted for very little, either in peace or war. It was in peace, however, before Flodden, and in his character of a *quasi*-pirate that the Howards hunted him down and killed him in a sea fight. King James, who was completing the largest ship ever built at Leith for the special use of his valiant admiral to be, rated him differently, and the grievance rankled. Whether the hero himself, or a devoted follower, or a triumphant foe, carved his name in this lonely bay, which must have been familiar enough with the sight of his flag sailing southward from the Firth, we may not know. But some rubbings of it have been taken even if it sees the light no more, which is possible.

The links of Embleton roll their mimic fern-clad mountains northward to the further horn of the bay, where a high grassy headland with rock-ribbed flanks and green breast looks across to Dunstanburgh. A pleasant track leads thither, tramped into a keen sward by generations of fisher folk travelling between the coast hamlet of Newton just beyond, and the parish metropolis, whose uncompromising outlines on the distant ridge one gets gradually accustomed to. The dunes of Embleton, as others on the same coast, appeal no doubt to their habitués, not merely for the picturesque foreground of summer verdure and autumn gold that they provide for the gleaming sands and changing seas behind, but for the

richness of their flora. Noticeable above all, and in a profusion uncommon I fancy to such places, the *geranium sanguineum* makes glowing patches of colour in July that quite dominate the wild vetch, the potentilla, the eye bright, the bedstraw, the wild thyme, and all the other modest denizens of seaside commons. Stray bunches of bell heather here and there, too, will in July be opening their earliest blossoms, and where the plough of the farmer, either by nature or ancient rights, has been thrust inland for a greater space, the gorse has seized upon the pastures and adds its yellow blooms to the scene and its sweet scents to the fresh and fragrant air. The wings of confiding and restless lapwings drub overhead, the gulls swoop in their company and feed in groups upon the wet edge of the sands, along whose margin the diminutive sandpipers scud in long-drawn flocks like things possessed.

This other fishing settlement lies snugly planted on a broad sandy strand, sheltered by Newton Point on the north and a long stretch of reefs and rocky islets to the south, a little group of one-storied cottages built in three sides of a square, the fourth one opening to the sands. There is enough room here, and acres to spare, for the gay-coloured Berwick "cobbles" to lie at ease in periods of enforced idleness, and a fine stretch for the hardy offspring of these hardy weather-beaten folks to sport over, while their mothers and their grandmothers perch betimes with their knitting upon the dunes above. From the signal station on Newton Point is a noble outlook. The black cliffs of Dunstanburgh craning seaward with their load of hoary towers four miles away shut out the south, and in this case one would not lift the barrier though the whole east coast of England were revealed in the process. But northward, over Beadnell and the red-tiled roofs of more fishing hamlets, the mighty crag of historic Bamburgh stands high above land and sea, while northward again, but at some distance from the shore, the numerous islands of the Farne cluster against the horizon. Facing inland, if the sky be reasonably clear, you can look over the nearer ranges to

the clear-cut masses of the Cheviots, that are in fact but a dozen miles away. No great liners plough these northern seas, but there are no lack of steamers wending their way to and from the mouth of the Firth or the more northerly Scottish ports, and in fair weather a fine sprinkling of fishing boats, with their red sails and their wayward courses, altogether more goodly to behold.

Coastguard stations, like lighthouses, have a fascination all their own. The gleaming whitewash of their exteriors seems to sit so well beneath the mast-rigged flagstaff on the green turf and against the blue sea; the man-of-war sort of cleanliness of their interiors, the burnished implements, the much-polished arms ranged on the racks, the bronzed and roseate countenances of the little garrison, and the usually cheerful outlook on the world which is not unnatural, as it has treated them well. For the coastguard, unless high ambitions have burned within him, is surely the most fortunate among tars. I turned in here on one occasion when half a dozen stalwart mariners were going through their practice in flash signals, one of them operating the instrument in a dark alcove, framing sentences apparently after his own wayward fancy, the chief of the station, in the mean time, taking note in a book of each man's performance as he shouted out the enigmatical readings. These cheerful stalwarts seemed to combine a great deal of entertainment with their instruction, every hesitation or mistake being hailed by the others who stood behind the man under examination with boisterous and good-humoured comment, the best incentive doubtless to exertion. It was not much like a drill sergeant and a squad of Tommies, but the ways of sailor men are different, though no doubt as efficacious. With ear by then accustomed to the Northumbrian dialect, I was somewhat taken back at the enunciation of these jovial tars as they shouted out each signalled word, without an "h" between them all, though they were on their best behaviour, so to speak; I had forgotten for the moment that I was in a little outpost of His Majesty's service, and was ashamed of myself that I had

failed to locate them when the chief told me afterwards they were all Devonshire men.

The village of Newton proper lies beyond, at the foot of the headland, a comparatively umbrageous agricultural-looking place with two or three farm-houses set among the trees, a village green, and a small manor-house, occupied by the last, I believe, of the great clan of Northumbrian Forsters to retain any appreciable acreage of Northumbrian soil. If time should be an object you may save some by returning to Embleton in a bee line across the fields, but these field paths in Northumberland have not the Arcadian significance that the name would suggest in Warwickshire or Sussex. The Northumbrian fields are not straggling enclosures of varied and limited acreage, on fortuitous and artistic lines, the outcome of a long and peaceful past. Their boundaries are not a wealth of untrimmed foliage, the dream of bird's-nesters, the refuge of the scattered partridge in September. The attractions of the North, it must be confessed at once, lie not in these details. Northumberland was a wasted and war-wracked country long after the southern peasant had forgotten what war meant, and it took some generations after peace fell on the land to pull itself together and settle down to serious agriculture. When it did it went straight ahead, first in advance, then in the wake of the incomparable agriculturalists just across its northern border. Its fields are great rectangles of a most unromantic kind. Its thorn fences are not of the uncompromising trimness of the Lothians, to be sure, but they waste no ground and afford small refuge to the birds of the air, nor often show any great wealth of bloom or blossom to the touch of what in the South would be May, but here is June.

## CHAPTER IV

### TO CHARLTON AND CHILLINGHAM

**L**YING back from the Northumbrian sea-coast some half-dozen miles, as already noted, and running nearly parallel with it, is a conspicuous range of hills. They spring, at modest height, but emphasized by bold escarpments of whinstone, not far from Berwick, and are known thereabouts as the Kyloes. A little to the southward they rise somewhat, and at the same time expand into rolling grouse moors and sheep pastures, contracting again as they approach Alnwick, where they gradually dip to let through the river Aln, flowing eastwards from the Lower Cheviots to the sea.

A pleasant circuit may be made from Embleton by taking a northward bound train to Belford, striking from there across the range to Chillingham, which nestles under its western base, thence down the centre of its widest and wildest portions, and dropping again to the seaboard country at north Charlton, and so home. Though I have traversed much of it in later autumn, when the heather was dead and the ferns were draping the hillsides with their ruddy gold, I would fain recall it here in July, when the heath was just beginning to blush faintly upon the moors, and the scent of the late Northumbrian hay crop in the lowlands was in every breeze. Nor for my part would I take the train to Belford, but a cycle rather, and go leisurely inland to the great North road, and thence in the fresh of the morning follow that adamantine and historic highway till six or seven miles from Embleton. The road from Belford crosses it, and scales the hills leading westward to Wooler and the valley of the Till.

At this date I presume there are no longer any belated beings to whom the cycle only suggests a perspiring wight, scorching with humped back from city to city. The motor is now the fiend in a hurry and the terror in the highway, compared to which the other in its most rampageous period was a modest and harmless thing. The very urchins in the village streets, dusting themselves like a covey of partridges, scarcely condescend to scatter at the warning bell, while the full-quivered matron at the cottage door eyes you almost with tenderness as a reminder of peaceful days gone by, which they did not sufficiently appreciate.

Many years ago, just as the safety bicycle was approaching its social promotion and the Battersea Park furor, I remember a letter to a leading Weekly from an altogether delightful vulgarian, who bitterly complained that the nerves of his dogs were being constantly tried as they accompanied him in his walks about the country roads. The question of life and limb was not raised, as the maddest scorcher never courted a collision with a dog; it was only the interference with their playful gambles that raised their master's choler. But the point of this incredible person's complaint was not so much his opinion that cycles should on this account be tabooed, but his further argument in support of so drastic a measure, namely, that "the county families did not use them." In less than a year, when his faithful and harassed pack were scattering before the wheels of peers and baronets, his point of view must have been dreadfully upset. He was obviously a recent recruit to the ranks of society, and wrote from a very home county indeed, where such recruiting has been going on so merrily and for so long a time that there is almost nothing of the genuine article left. What would our ingenuous friend say now, when dogs and even a proportion of cyclists themselves have been practically driven from the road, unless, indeed, for the consolation that what he conceived to be county families were conspicuous offenders. The humble cycle has now adapted itself wholly to rural uses of the less dashing kind. It leans frequently against the

wayside gate, while its owner looks round his cattle on the further side. It lies in the shade of a fence, waiting the close of the road-mender's and even the stone-breaker's daily toil ; it is a regular feature at market or stock auction, though for many social and sporting purposes it remains, and must remain, humanly speaking, an indispensable convenience to a great number of people. Lastly, for those who have a fancy for seeing something of their own country in independent leisurely fashion it has no equivalent, both on its own account and for getting to good points for hill walking.

After crossing the main line near Christon Bank station one's further progress westward to the great North road is by devious and pleasant ways, that skirt for a space the luxuriant woods of Falloden, which encircle one of the very few red-brick country houses of consequence in Northumberland. Falloden, now the seat, as mentioned earlier, of Viscount Grey, together with the estate of Rock Hall, just to the southward, and other lands, was the property of the Salkelds in the seventeenth century. Two of the later ones, brothers apparently, occupying respectively these two houses, were renowned throughout the north, as the two Knights of Shropshire were a little later throughout the south, for their skill in planting, gardening, and land improving. The general air of leafy luxuriance, fostered no doubt by their successors on both estates, may in part, perhaps, be attributed to their earlier efforts in a wind-swept and war-wracked country. Rock Hall lies just to the south of the old fortified tower of Preston and of Ellingham church and manor-house, near which latter point our much meandering byway meets the North road. Gutted by fire in the eighteenth century, and since tastefully restored and enlarged, it still contains the Tudor manor-house, and the pele tower from which it sprang, that was reared by a Harbottle about 1400, when strifes were incessant and Harbottles in the thick of them all. The Bosanquets of Huguenot origin have now owned it for a century ; a place indeed of ancient fame, snugly embowered amid mellow gardens behind an avenue of limes, that looks



down the street of a well-ordered hamlet, flanked by a little Norman church of much distinction. Many men went out from its gates to play conspicuous parts in the stormy story of the Border and the north. Harbottles, Salkelds, and Fenwicks, whose very names have a restless, turbulent sound in ears that are open to the merest elements of Northumbrian lore, and always among the foremost from the days of Bruce to those of the Pretender. A Salkeld was a prominent local leader in the second part of the Civil War, was captured, escaped to fight for Charles the Second in Ireland, and twenty years later, as an old man, drew his sword for James the Second in the same country; returning ultimately to an impoverished estate, where he lived and died at the age of ninety in Queen Anne's reign, leaving no male heir. The veteran was buried here under the altar of Rock church, having crowded as many incidents into his long life as any heady cavalier of his day could desire. Among them one is forced to note with some disapproval the deliberate and unprovoked murder of one of the Swinburnes. Nor can this be set down to a mere outburst of youthful passion, for the offender was over thirty when he stabbed the above-mentioned poor gentleman in the belly, of which hurt he died, merely because he would not take a glass with him, when one of the pair at least had already taken too much. At any rate, Captain Salkeld, as he then was, had exceeded, according to the evidence before the coroner's jury. The over-hasty captain, however, like a modern Kentucky editor, retired into the next county for a brief space to let the affair blow over, which it did owing, doubtless, to the turmoil of the Civil War, in which he turned his ever-ready sword to a better purpose for three Stuarts, and at the same time, as he no doubt considered, for his country. One of the Fenwicks, which family immediately succeeded him in a brief tenure of Rock Hall, perpetrated an even worse crime, in that he was not drunk. But times had changed by Queen Anne's advent and the murderer in this case met his just desert. This, indeed, is better remembered by Northumbrians, and tells

how Fenwick, of Rock, during assize week at Newcastle, when the country gentry were there in force, entered an inn parlour where Ferdinando Forster, M.P. for the county, was sitting, and, doubtless with unconciliatory emphasis, sang a clan refrain, "Sir Walter Fenwick is the flower of them a'." This was too much for a Forster, for this one at any rate, even in the eighteenth century, and there were some words. But ceremony by this time had curbed the promiscuous licence of even blood feuds. The other did not emit the ancient war cry, "A Fenwick! a Fenwick!" and draw at once on Forster, but a few hours later sent him in due order a challenge by John Hall, of Otterburn. Forster was sitting late at supper, but as the moon was shining, he remarked that the business might as well be despatched at once. So the two repaired with their company to a retired spot called the Thorn Tree, long swamped in the chaos of the modern city. At the moment of first crossing swords Forster, it appears, slipped and fell on his back, whereat his base opponent stepped forward and stabbed him deliberately to the heart as he lay on the ground. The murderer attempted flight, but was soon secured, tried a month later, and hung at the "White Cross," near the scene of his crime. His wife being with child, was in court throughout the trial, and after the sentence flung herself at the judge's feet, entreating his mercy. But times had sadly changed in Northumberland. "Madam, I am sorry for you," was the reply, "but we cannot have our members of Parliament murdered in our streets." Upon the day of the execution the gates of the city were closed lest a rescue should be attempted by the people of the north, among whom the name of Fenwick was held in high regard. But enough of Rock, which by the middle of the eighteenth century had become famous in more peaceful paths, and had inspired some bard with a deficient sense of cadence and quality to sing—

"Rock gardens would please Epicurus' grace,  
Brave Salkeld's once, now generous Proctor's place."

From hence the great North road to Scotland forges

forward over low ridges, with the hills approaching near upon the left, while beyond the wide stretching levels of the coast country the North Sea gleams away to the horizon. It was a brilliant summer morning when I made the first of several recent journeys along this section of the ancient coach-road, and got the first glimpse on a big scale of a region whose general features and even details had remained with me since youth, so far as they may be gathered from frequent journeys through it. It was an inspiring outlook in any case, owing much to its spaciousness, its boundless expanse of sea, chequered with moving colours, as a summer breeze, blowing down from the distant Cheviots, drove the light clouds in scattered fragments between its dimpled surface and the sun. From the distant towers and grim fangs of Dunstanburgh I could follow the coast-line by the signal station gleaming white on the green crest of Newton head, along the curving line of Beadnell Bay, to where the mighty pile of Bamburgh rests on its rocky throne. Beyond it the strange archipelago of the Farne, each islet touched on most days with a gleam of foam, clustered around its lighthouse height. Presently, too, the sandy flat of Holy Island, craning far seaward, came within easy sight, and like a small St. Michael's Mount, upon an isolated rocky steep, its ancient fortress sprang above the green and yellow levels of the island and the blue of the sea with extraordinary distinction. And what of the country between? On this occasion the hay harvest was advanced, and Northumberland is now in the main a grass country. Men and women were piling it up in all directions into those monstrous cocks or "pikes," after the fashion of the north. By the roadside and towards the sea-coast, square upon square of the great green chessboard was fast dimpling with the produce of the heaviest crop in a dozen years. Everything else, too, in July was green, the pastures where Irish store cattle or half-bred sheep were fattening, of a paler shade from weeks of even the tempered sunshine of the north. The occasional grain fields, though already in head, were a long time yet from yellowing. Here and there

a square of ruddy brown marked a breadth of turnip land, where brawny short-skirted bondagers, with the regulation pink neckerchiefs and blue blouses, were still plying their hoes. The woods, too, spreading betimes across the open levels, were still the woods of June in softer climes, and the leaves of ash and oak rippled in the crisp west wind with all the freshness of early summer. The red roofs of cottage and hamlet glimmered from point to point, and here and there afar off on the coast showed a bright speck of red and white against a patch of blue-black shadow that some dark impotently threatening cloud had thrown for a moment over the sea. But of the large homesteads, planted at distances which bespeak the amplitude of their holdings, and the substance of their occupants, what can be said? Not often much for the consolation of the artist and the camera bearer! When Northumbria shook off the agricultural lethargy that followed inevitably on those long-protracted ages when neither roof-tree nor life was safe, she awoke to set her house in order to some practical purpose. Of small holdings or small fields of curving lines, or many gabled, timber-frame houses she would have none. She laid herself out—in her smoother agricultural portions, that is to say—in large farms and in generous fields, all uncompromisingly rectangular. She built her farmhouses too, on practical, substantial lines, a proceeding simplified by her splendid quarries. She erected her cottages on an almost uniform model, but not otherwise unpicturesque, like those across the Border: a single storey of solid stone and a roof of red tiles. These in great part she has gathered round the big farmhouse they are intended to serve, giving the latter with its large outbuildings the appearance of a village and an air of consequence not often attained by homesteads of equal standing in the south. In former days, when grain was paramount—occasionally even yet—when twenty to thirty big round stacks, neatly trimmed and thatched, were added to the establishment, it was a sight to stir the soul of Cobbett, who saw these things with the eye, not only of a rural economist, but in a sense of a poet without a poet's

detachment from the inwardness of the picture and of the fullness of its meaning. If the railway traveller turn impatiently to his newspaper before these great trim undulations and outstanding rural fortresses of stone and slate, and stack, and red tiled roof, and bored perhaps by the foreground detail, overlooks the spaciousness of the canvas and the nature of its setting, it is only natural. Out on the face of it, however, with room to move and leisure to look about him, he would see the frame in which the picture lay: the wild, curving, be-castled coast-line upon the one side, the distant Cheviots looming high upon the other, and the triumphs of agriculture that lay between would cease perhaps to oppress his unsympathetic soul. If he could to any degree recall the past of these well-looking, peaceful undulations, and turn them back into a picturesque and patchy waste, and replace the homesteads with the pele towers which stood on or about their site, the measure of his appreciation would no doubt be fuller still. But this is a matter of a temperament, and would require an effort of imagination unreasonable to expect in the average Saxon, who is generally concerned with more practical affairs.

East Lothian, which is cast between wild moors and the same rugged coast, is even more aggressively utilitarian than East Northumberland. I well remember, as if it were yesterday, my own first impression of it in the heyday of its agricultural pride, when the fame of it was all over Europe. I looked about me too, not with the passing interest of a tourist, but with the eagerness, nay, the anxiety, with which one-and-twenty looks around his domicile for some two years to come. I remember the momentary heart sinking as the astonishing trimness of that close-shorn, prolific province spread around me to the brief limits of a murky winter's day. But I remember also the reaction next morning when a bright sun revealed the whole brown sweep of distant moorlands that hems in that famous county on the south and west, and I realized that they were the Lammermuirs, for at least I knew my Scott. Arthur's seat, too, and the Pentlands loomed

finely on the north-west horizon from my bedroom window, though near twenty miles away. The hills of Fife rolled gloriously along the further shores of the wide opening Firth of Forth at no ignoble altitude, while behind and near by was that Northumbrian-like coast-line guarded by the Bass rock and its tributary islands and overlooked by the aspiring cone of Berwick Law and the ruined towers of the Black Douglas, and many another haunt of ancient fame. No smoke of steam-ploughs, though near a dozen were sometimes puffing within sight, no tall, red engine chimneys, which made the big, bare homesteads look like factories, nor the miles of treeless squares bordered with low, trim hedges and laden in fruition time with a weight of produce unequalled in Europe, could destroy the poetry of that country. For, as in Northumberland, you could see it nearly all from almost any point, its romantic and suggestive fringes, its great and fertile heart. Indeed, the very materialism of the latter grew upon you with closer knowledge in a way that even touched the imagination if you had one, as did the enterprising skill of the men who made six hundred acres produce like a spaded garden with thirty-acre fields for beds, who sometimes paid as high as five pounds an acre rent, and laid out nearly double the capital per acre at that time regarded as adequate in England, and still saved money above a generous living. There was something great in the enterprise and fearless expenditure that stirred nature to such unprecedented effort, and produced such a sight as East Lothian displayed in harvest time ; or even in October, when the potato fields cast up their store before the prongs of the " lifting ploughs," and again, a little latter, when the frost-shrivelled leaves showed up the serried ranks of swedes or yellow turnips jostling one another in the rows. I have seen two great wheat harvests in Manitoba, where the local talks of twenty-five bushels all round with just pride, for it pays well. An English farmer would starve to-day on an average Manitoba yield, which is less than that. Even in the high-priced days of the seventies he would hardly have paid his way. A Lothian farmer would

have regarded such a prospect as a miserable failure, for he produced nearly twice as much with tolerable consistency. Perhaps what touched one so much in Lothian and Berwickshire was the prodigious contrast between its then pre-eminence and the apathy and backwardness which had distinguished that region not much more than a century earlier, when the lairds meekly imported English bailiffs to teach "the new farming" to their by no means tractable and generally reactionary tenants. Northumberland, too, learnt from the south, though somewhat earlier, and then went ahead of it with northern vigour and enterprise, to become, speaking broadly, the inspirer of the Merse and Lothian agriculturists, who in turn eclipsed Northumberland. But the latter followed in its pupil's wake, though perhaps a goodish way behind. At least it used to be thought so, and I fancy with good cause, by the Lothian farmers, whose complacency was fostered by the steady procession of Danes, Swedes, Frenchmen, Germans, and Americans, of the land-owning class mostly, to say nothing of Englishmen, who used not only to come as admiring visitors, but often remained for a year or two to sit at their feet. But the glory has long departed with the collapse of British tillage on a great scale before the cruel slump in grain. These men who did so much for Scotland have been mostly wiped out, not merely as individuals, for Nature by now would have almost accomplished that, but by name and race as farmers. The Lothians still lead Britain in the sorry matter of tillage farming, but the present occupants entered into a great inheritance, and the present landlords do not naturally get anything like the rents which the men of old bid against one another for the privilege of paying without fear or favour. It was from this point of view that in the early seventies I acquired some passing familiarity with the Northumbrian landscape from the train window, and felt not quite a stranger as in these degenerate days I looked upon it once more at much closer quarters. But what a difference! An epoch and a generation have passed away. Where all was tillage, following in the wake

of the Lothians but in the van of England, grass overwhelmingly prevails, and the grazier is now king. Losses, immense losses, must assuredly have preceded the change ; but, on the other hand, there has not been the same disruption of the famous old farming families, that, I am told by those who should best know, has occurred to the northward. There was not so much at stake, nor quite the same high pressure. Feudal attachments seemed dead on the long leaseholds of East Lothian in the early seventies, commercialism the prevailing factor between landlord and tenant, which struck every southerner who was long enough in the country to realize with peculiar force, and most Englishmen who went there were from the two classes best qualified to notice the contrast. In East Northumberland, the old relation between landlord and tenant was much less detached, and, I think, remains so after their mutual tribulations, a condition which, I fancy, also applies to Roxburghshire. So rents, no doubt, were even relatively lower in the good times than in the Lothians, and the dislocation of individual families in the eighties and nineties less violent.

But some readers will not thank me for all this farming talk ; most people, however, with an eye for landscape, are interested in hedges. I have already briefly touched on the Northumbrian variety, and as I travelled the North Road amid the scent of hay, it became obvious enough that the characteristic fence of olden times was still a luminous feature in the landscape. It may be seen, to be sure, here and there all over England, for it is nothing but a riotous thorn hedge, with the appearance of having been riddled and raided by stock or vermin to the height of perhaps five feet, till nothing is left but daylight and thin bare trunks, carrying, however, a large burden of upper foliage as Nature admits of. But nowhere else does it catch the eye in all direction as a regular institution. The younger farmers say it is mere carelessness—a legacy from the bad times through which they passed as boys. But I know better, for I remember it well myself in the palmy days, and how the Lothian men, who trimmed their low hedges as in



a garden, used to chuckle as they passed south with critical condescending eye in the season of the agricultural shows. The older farmers seem to regard it, with more than complacency, as an old institution, holding that it makes a better shelter for stock, a matter in these pastoral days of obvious importance. If I were a sheep seeking shelter in a driving storm, I am free to admit I should prefer a fence with a bottom to it, to one like an interminable row of umbrellas set bolt upright, or a continuous awning with no side to it. One advantage, however, is undeniable if fortuitous, for the bare stems make excellent posts on which to spring the barbed wire, that has stirred up almost as much choler in its brief day as the motor.

On this first occasion pursuing the North Road, I was told by various persons to keep an eye on the left hand for the "muckle posts," which denoted the turn over Charlton Moor to Wooler. My eye, however, was too persistently kept seaward, looking at those objects I have in part noted here, and thinking of those bygone days which they recalled, that the "muckle posts"—two stone gate pillars sufficiently suggestive of a private road to deter any strange wayfarers from taking it for a public one—escaped me unawares. I had already before this passed Twizell house, retired in woods, and crossed the Lucker burn, which sings in a rocky channel beneath their shade, and found myself approaching Belford, where a wholesome looking grandame brought my attention to the fact that those elusive "muckle posts" lay far behind me. She was a communicative veteran, on whose soul the wiping out of a certain ancient family in the neighbourhood, whom she had served apparently in youth, lay heavily. The Northumbrian peasant bears a more outwardly suspicious mien towards the stranger than any in England, and when you get back into the border dales it becomes almost truculent, though not thus intended. His aloofness is only surpassed by that of some natives in Wales, who will get over a fence if they see a stranger coming. But this is only because they are fearful of being addressed in English, and betraying their deficiency in

the Sassenach tongue. But the Northumbrian's taciturnity is superficial, a mere Border trait, inherited from times when every alien face might indicate a foe. He will never speak nor even nod to you of his own accord, and only return your salutation occasionally, and then in a gruff way, as if you had forced him to do an uncanny thing. It is no use good-nighting or good-morning him, as he has no such words in his vocabulary, and apparently thinks them meaningless and foolish. If you wish to get an answer, you must remark that it is a soft day, if it is raining, or a hard one if freezing, or venture on a weather forecast, or allude to the elemental condition of the day before. He will then reply in kind, sometimes at quite a length, and hold you as a normal being. It is only his outer man, however, that is thus frigid. A well-known cardinal axiom for getting about Northumberland smoothly and sociably is that the stranger must make the first advances. If he does not, he may never exchange a word with the humbler rural folk in a month of days. Indeed, he is expected thus to take the initiative. It is like some countries, where in a higher circle it is etiquette for the alien to make the first call. Go up to a Northumbrian and open conversation with him, you will find a frank and friendly and often quite a talkative person. Nay, more than this, those who know him best, say that this method of procedure gives him positive gratification, and certainly my own experience would not lead me to contest the fact. One must be careful of generalizing, however, anywhere, and more especially in Northumberland. The Tynesiders, the men of the east, and those again of the western dales have as much difference of character as they have of dialect. The Lothian hind of my recollection, and my association with him was inevitably pretty intimate, was gruff and taciturn; but, unlike the Northumbrian, his reserve was an enduring one, and his lack of grace—social I mean, not spiritual—was perennial. But if you had offered him a shilling or anything for a merely nominal service, he would reject it with contumely as something like an insult, a dour and honest man, and a sober one

too, for he took his whisky all at once, at quite respectably long intervals, lying off for a day or two, and the doctors used to say it did him good. But the ethics of this liquor question have greatly changed, in the South at any rate. I am not sure about the North, while in Scotland tradition, I am told, dies harder still. But the lining of the Northern stomach is of special material, and no Scotsman, with so many octogenarian ten-tumbler men still about him, is likely to be scared by articles in the Reviews, which threaten an early grave, death, and premature decay in tablespoon measures.

Twizell house, once the abode of the Selbys, owes the wealth of varied foliage which screens it from the world to the member of that family who in the earlier nineteenth century had some national fame as a writer on birds and trees. Adderstone Hall, which lies a mile or so seaward, is an old place of the Forsters ; and it was a blacksmith, I believe from the adjoining village, who accompanied the celebrated Dorothy on her ride to London after the affair of the 'fifteen, when she assisted in her brother's escape from the Tower, and for which easy solution of a somewhat embarrassing responsibility, it was whispered, the authorities were not wholly ungrateful to her.

A mile of steady climb westward, through an enclosed country by an immense red sandstone water-mill, deep shadowed by still loftier trees, whose deserted air and idle wheel proclaim that times have changed, and our scene too wholly changes. For the road here breaks out on Chatton Moor, and may be seen trailing far away over the wilds towards another obvious and deep descent, an interval of low country beyond which, some seven miles away, the Cheviots lie piled imposingly against the western sky. We shall see much of them later on in our journey, so I will only pause here for a moment, on this lonely stretch of moorland road, to say that I know of no point from which they make a finer display. The noblest portion of the range is here framed, as it were, between the further slopes of the lower plateau one is crossing. The broad summit of the "Muckle Cheviot," the

king of the group, rises where it should rise to a height of twenty-seven hundred feet in the centre of the rear ; a mighty Border sentinel with a foot planted in both counties, and supported close at hand by the bolder and scarcely lower crown of Hedgehope, while between us and them, amid the broken wooded country below, the river Till ripples with ever sinuous curves to the northward and the Tweed.

This high stretch of moorland road, delightful as it is upon a summer day, crosses the central range at a somewhat narrow point, and in less than two miles begins to descend again between the trammels of the hedgerow. To right and left, however, particularly the latter, being the south, the breezy sunny waste sweeps away to regions far remote from the ridges which bound our view. A finger-post displays itself at the junction of another solitary road with our own and, as seen against this sky at a distance and in such a spot, is not unsuggestive of a gallows. For this is most emphatically a place where such things should have happened, not because it is merely a bit of moorland, like several hundred thousand acres of the county of Northumberland, but because two highways, pursuing otherwise a normal civilized low country course, stride over its lonely and exposed face in a manner that somehow makes the "solitary horseman" of our old friend G. P. R. James's opening chapters leap at once to the mind. For sprites, highwaymen, murders, duels, and other horrors fascinating in the armchair have a fancy for lonely places, but the latter must not be too remote for handy association, as it were, with the human or spectral world ; a stretch of moorland road, like this one rather, connecting two reasonably peopled districts, not too much travelled, but unavoidably so by a good few. That is the place where things worth telling happen, or used to happen, and such in an eminent degree is Chatton Moor. Such at least it seemed to me, even as I sat on the dry turf beneath the finger-post on a bright July noon with the scent of the whins and the wild thyme pervading the air, the larks filling it with song, and the peewits with complaint. A Scotch

shepherd—half the “herds” in the Northumbrian hills are Scotsmen—with the assistance of a few hurdles and his dogs, was smearing the feet of some half-bred gimmers close by, a rather unlooked-for operation in this high country. But the moor was “aye wet” hereabouts, he said, and the heavier sheep much addicted to ills of the feet. He was somewhat of a pessimist too, this particular herder, and with a breadth of view one would hardly expect from a man of flocks, deplored the setting to grass of so much of the low country for the number of good men he declared he knew to be out of work. An equally harmonious figure then broke upon the waste in the shape of a horseman approaching at a hand gallop, suggestive somehow, so far as the horse was concerned, of a hunter in the making rather than of a man in a hurry, and this was pretty obvious when a really imposing specimen of the Northumbrian farmer, well up in years, but ruddy of face, long of limb, and straight as a pine, joined the group, on a young horse with quarters, shoulders, and breeding. He remarked to me that the wind seemed going round a bit, which is only one of the many local versions of “good-day,” and I left him to discuss more important and privy matters with his shepherd just as a tramp came up, pulled off his boots, and laid himself full length on the turf across the road in an attitude of leisurely contemplation. Nothing else happened on Chatton Moor that morning, nor did I encounter even so much when, many weeks later, in the gloom of a wild autumn evening, I traversed it again for the last time. Then, indeed, both the Cheviots on the one hand and the sea-coast on the other were veiled, and the fir corses at the edge of the waste moaned drearily, as if they had all manner of tales on their mind.

Standing finely up on the western edge of the moor is the bold summit of Ros castle, where, half buried in heather, are the well-defined ramparts of a pre-historic camp. Against the long western face of the slope beneath, lies the ancient Park of Chillingham, famous for its wild cattle, and on the further fringe of it the noble battlemented pile, which long

ago passed from the Greys to the Tankervilles. The main road heading for Wooler drops down with steep gradients and many corners to the village of Chatton, where the low stone cottages look bowery and trim and smiling, as they should do in the heart of a great estate, and a long stone bridge close to the village crosses the Till, babbling gently between crumbly red banks on its way to that distant Flodden, which has conferred upon it, I presume, such measures of fame as it enjoys in the outer world. Edward the First was here for a short time during those critical campaigns when the whole future of Scotland, perhaps, hung on the measure of his waning days, and the pele tower in which the Chatton vicars of the fifteenth century were compelled to entrench themselves is embodied in the present parsonage. A hostelry with some air of rural distinction is a prominent feature in Chatton, and enjoys a monopoly between the coast country and Wooler. I made some acquaintance with it later, when the grayling which now swarm in the Till to the partial discomfiture of its indigenous inhabitants, the trout, came into season. It was then the halfway house of jocund farmers returning from the autumn sales with the biggest cheques in their pockets, or at their banks, they had handled on a sheep account for twenty years.

To get to Chillingham, however it is necessary to turn from the upper road at the edge of the moor and pursue another which, descending a gentler and more southerly slope, brings you to the lodge gates in a short two miles. A straight avenue leads to the castle, which is a large square enclosing a courtyard with an embattled tower rising at each corner. The building was much restored by Inigo Jones, but has still a stern and feudal aspect, not lessened by the sombre stone of which it is fashioned. The door now used is approached through the courtyard, and from thence a narrow winding staircase leads up to the state-rooms, which are of imposing proportions, and contain a great store of trophies and valuable paintings, among the latter being several of the

Stuart kings. On the end wall of the dining-room hangs a large canvas of Landseer, which has some interest as being by repute the artist's favourite among his own productions, and as much perhaps as representing the late earl standing over the carcase of one of his own wild bulls, which just before had nearly succeeded in killing him. Economy of room for actual living and sleeping in is certainly one merit of the feudal style pure and simple. For of hall-way or corridor space there appears to be almost none at Chillingham, which may be accounted by modern standards, perhaps, as somewhat undignified in a stately fabric with stately rooms. A narrow passage running along the courtyard side on both storeys, opening into the various large chambers which represents the width of the curtain of the castle and look outward, is simplicity itself. The corkscrew staircases up and down by way of the angle towers are not, I should imagine, so simple. I mounted to the battlements which presented a Froissart-like bird's-eye view of the quadrangular pile, and was sorry to remember that none of it had been built when Henry the Third was here, not even the corner towers which, I believe, are fourteenth century. At such a height, too—for the castle is of three and four storeys—one could realize how unusually shut in it was for a building of such size and such renown by lofty heights upon one side and luxuriant timber on the others. I did not penetrate to the ancient prison and underlying dungeon. You may see these gloomy survivals of a merciless age all over the country, but nowhere else in Britain can you see the direct and unmixed descendants of its original wild cattle, still in a semi-wild condition. Conspicuous, too, among the household gods of Chillingham is a slab of stone, from the interior of which one of those supernatural frogs that astonished the world from time to time hopped out some centuries ago. There is a long Latin inscription upon it of seventeenth-century date, explaining the incident, and its authorship seems to have caused more discussion than the frog among antiquaries, as is their way. Chillingham, as already mentioned, belonged to the Greys from quite early

times, and still belongs to them in a sense that Alnwick and Warkworth belong to the Percies. But in 1714, when the heiress of the last Greys and first Lord Tankerville married Lord Ossulston, she did not, as in the other case, carry her name with the estates. The earldom of Tankerville, however, was shortly revived in the person of this gentleman, which was an equivalent, though his descendants retain their family patronymic of Bennet. The park, where this world-famous herd ranges, does not immediately adjoin the castle. Their domain is a wildish natural kind of chase some fifteen hundred acres in extent, which runs in broad ridges and hollows up the lower slopes of the overhanging moors, and includes considerable stretches of natural woodland. The herd maintained at about sixty head are kept strictly under lock and key, and no other animals share their ample range. No one whatsoever is admitted there without the keeper, lest he needlessly stampede the herd or they him; the odds between the two eventualities being apparently about even. So we duly set forth for the bounds of the chase with the interesting and informing veteran who had its touchy and high-strung denizens under his special care.

The history of the herd is, of course, familiar, so far as it can be ascertained, to most Northumbrians. Much has been written of them both in past and present times by those more nearly concerned, as is natural enough in a matter of such uncommon interest. It is generally agreed that they are a remnant of the cattle that originally roamed this Border country, whether of indigenous or imported origin, and were enclosed in the chase they now occupy some time early in the Middle Ages. They must have remained in a savage state and undrivable, or the Scots would surely have rounded them up into one of the innumerable hauls of stock they gathered from the valley of the Till. No doubt they were hunted as game by their lords of old, and the bulls, when confronted by bow and arrow, must have provided some moments sufficiently delirious even for a Border baron. How these ancients handled them, however, we may not know. Since modern history began



those singled out for slaughter have been killed by firearms, and it takes a ball very accurately planted, indeed, to stop the charge of a wounded bull. In the days of imperfect weapons, however, the whole countryside were called in to assist; and these encounters, according to all accounts, were distinguished by many thrilling incidents. Latter-day anecdotes of a more humorous kind are related sometimes in connection with artists prompted by zeal or a commission to a too close interview with their potential sitters. Among others, both Landseer and Bewick are said to have been eventually treed before they had finished with their models. Under the wing of the keeper I felt very much happier than I have often felt when traversing in waders and brogues, a Welsh riverside pasture dominated by that worst of all tame bulls, a black Welshman, and I am sure was very much safer. The Cullingham herd keep always together, and it was some time before we discovered their whereabouts. It seems that their habits and movements when approached carelessly are conducted under a sort of hereditary system, the same to-day as described nearly a century ago. If thus alarmed they make off at a gallop, wrote a well-known steward of Chillingham for Bewick's book, and after travelling a certain distance wheel and return to within forty or fifty yards, tossing their heads in threatening fashion. This manœuvre they repeat several times, shortening the measure of their retreat, however, on each occasion, and coming proportionately nearer to the incautious stranger, when it is high time, says the old expert, for him to leave. But though I should like to have seen them stampede, the keeper did not, his mission being to approach as close as possible without disturbing them. This we did, under his skilful manœuvring with more than common success, and got within about sixty yards, while some powerful binoculars brought the animals virtually within touch. They are of quite uniform colour, white with a very faint tawny shade in it, a black nose, more or less red ears, and white horns of the branching Hereford type with black tips. And by the same token I seem to remember some evidence that

the cattle of the Welsh Border in John's reign are mentioned as white with red ears, the origin of the Hereford in the opinion of a friend who was much concerned with them and their herd book.

These ancient Britons did not much like being looked at. One after another they slowly rose to their feet. The two or three bulls among them, whose respective idiosyncrasies the keeper dwelt upon with knowledge and humour, moved uneasily about. A single calf, recently dropped, was with the herd, for these additions often escaped their custodian's eye; the mothers having a passion for hiding their offspring in some unfrequented corner of the chase, and cunningly returning to the herd after its frequent wants are satisfied. The calves themselves crouch like a hare on its form when discovered, a proceeding regarded as one of the many points in favour of their savage origin. The bulls fight furiously, the uproar of such a contest had been heard the day before at the castle a mile away, no less than four of them being engaged at once. Those which, either from age or fighting power, are unable to hold their own are relegated to the ignominy of an enclosed paddock at the edge of the park, where we passed close to them on our return, and noted the difference in their bearing.

At the gate of the north lodge of the castle a small hamlet of cottages clusters about a green knoll, on which is set the ancient and interesting little church. Restoration, as might be expected, has been here busy. The original Norman doorway, however, still remains, and in the chancel aisle there is a beautiful and richly decorated altar-tomb of the fifteenth century, carrying full-length effigies of Sir Ralph Grey and his wife. This knight played a conspicuous and mixed part in the border as a Yorkist. Under the great Earl of Warwick he conducted the successful siege of Dunstanburgh. Dissatisfied at being relegated to a second place in the command of Alnwick, he betrayed it to the Lancastrians and joined their party. A year later he played the coward on their behalf, running away and starting a general stampede

of his friends before the Yorkist forces on the Devil's Water near Hexham. A little later in the same year, however, he played the hero, if so much may be accounted to a man who had no chance of quarter. For while in command of Bamburgh castle he refused all summons to surrender, though his very chamber was riddled by the king's brass gun, "Dijon," and declared he would die in the castle. He did what was practically the same thing, for the fortress being breached and carried by assault, he was captured, taken to Doncaster, and there executed. He looks a very noble moustachioed gentleman, lying here in rich armour and red tunic, with his lady beside him in loose robes and high headdress. The sides of the tomb are profuse in armorial bearings, supported by angels and carved figures. Behind, on the wall, more angels are depicted carrying the souls of the illustrious pair to that paradise which it is difficult to imagine as the congenial domicile of a border baron, according to his conception of it. An upright figure holds the departing warrior's helmet and crest, which he is abandoning for good, but with such apparent confidence on the part of his sorrowing friends.

The rocky, heath-girt pinnacles of Ros castle, referred to as we descended from Chatten Moor to Chillingham, rise over a thousand feet above the latter and the Till valley. It is the loftiest and most conspicuous point on this undulating platform of central moorland, that we so recently crossed at a narrow point, and is well worth the climb for the prospect it holds out to the climber. From its summit you front at close quarters the whole range of the Cheviots, and can follow the course of many a winding valley by the fold of its overhanging hills far into their lonely heart. Over the bright summer greenery of the ancient chase that spreads downwards from your feet, the Till displays itself in two or three miles of silvery loops amid its bordering meadows, and far away down its course, over the tops of intervening ridges, the wooded crest of Flodden marks the neighbourhood of the Scottish border. Away over the valley to the west and

south-west, further than eye can mark on the clearest of days, spread the illimitable solitudes of the Northumbrian borderland. One sees too in a moment why the faggots were kept here ready for the match, and why it was that the flaming beacon on Ros, above all others, gave timely warning to the men of Alnwick, and the flat country behind it, that the Scots had crossed the Tweed. In the actual foreground of our outpost height, however, waving southward from its very shoulders, are the heathy solitudes of this central range, over which you may wander back again for miles in the direction of Embleton or Alnwick without encountering any human life worth speaking of.

It was on another brilliant day in this same July, with the better half of it before me, that I found myself at Ros castle with a companion who knew the tortuous, but still negotiable, tracks threading the heart of the waste, and had an acquaintance with such lonely souls as lead contented but laborious days thereon. We had crossed the hills from Embleton by way of South Charlton, at which point they filter out into a narrower and lower ridge of large enclosures and fern-decked sheep pastures. We had dropped thence beside a brawling stream into the valley that soon receives the Till, or the Breamish, as it is called in youth. There, striking the Alnwick and Wooler road, we faced north, hugging the western base of the hills, and passing in due course the pleasant village of Eglington. And so by Bewick to Chillingham, where a steep and stony lane climbed in tortuous fashion through sun and shade on to the moorland, within a ten minutes' walk of the summit of Ros castle. It was now close upon August, and the heather, which in great part covered the surrounding waste, was rapidly spreading its purple robe. The solitude on these Chillingham and Chatton moors was, of course, not comparable to that which broods over those greater wastes of Cheviot and Tynedale to the westward, where we shall find ourselves later. But so far as it went, for many miles at any rate, in all directions it was of the upper, not of the lower world—a land of sheep

and grouse, but of few men. It took my fancy no little, this fifteen or twenty square miles of high undulating moorland, intrrenched upon all sides by civilization, yet so absolutely silent and so wholly aloof from it. At the head of the two Tynes, the Coquet or the Rede, or again in the Cheviots, you expect to lose yourself from the world for as long as you please and far as you like. But, after all, it is these unexpected patches of moorland, so characteristic of Northumberland, which make for that delightful variety which is one of its leading features. There are foregrounds betimes as flat and park-like and domestic as Northamptonshire, without a hill worth mentioning in sight. Yet in two or three miles the high-road may break out suddenly on to the edge of a heathery waste, where a grouse or a blackcock may spring at a moment, or the cry of a curlew tell its sure tale of solitude.

In the five or six miles of our leisurely progress through the heart of the moor we encountered four human habitations, at three of which my companion had reason to call and halt awhile. The fourth was momentarily deserted, for on the previous day, during the worst thunderstorm I have seen for many years, the lightning had come down the chimney, shattering the brickwork, and killing a dog that lay on the hearth in the centre of a group of children, who remained unscathed. As the bearers of so altogether sensational a piece of news, fortuitously gathered by the way from a postman, we were not merely welcome as rare visitants from the outer world, but gossips of the first importance; particularly at the first domicile, which was that of a large farmer, owner of considerable flocks, who was chafing in an armchair from the effects of a fall from his horse. Our next visit was to a smaller establishment, where a capable lady, obviously well qualified to manage a sheep-run, enjoyed my companion's budget of news, while her dependents plied an industrious knife and fork through an open door, and rallied one another in the purest Northumbrian. A wind-swept domicile, indeed, was this, unprotected by bush or tree; a few

yards of vegetable garden sheltered by a big hedge was the only break in the moor grass and heather, which grew up to the very walls. The next house was a further drop in the social scale—that of a Scotch shepherd ; and by this time the moor air had provoked an inopportune craving for sustenance. But the sight of our fair hostess—for she was of a truth exceeding fair—plunged in her washing tubs among her ruddy offspring, promised to thwart our designs on her loaf and teapot, for we had not the heart to propose such a disturbance of so important a domestic function. But once within doors—for my companion was slightly acquainted and had a message to deliver—she divined out of the very kindness of her heart our situation, and overbore our stoutest protests unflinchingly. This young couple were from Perthshire. I do not know whether Perthshire produces many pleasant lassies of such natural charm and unaffected refinement of manners, for this was no ex-lady's-maid polish—nothing so vulgar ; nor yet any Sunday-school grooming from a model village : just a peasant's daughter from the wilds in the north, and a shepherd's wife in the wilds here. I don't know what Wordsworth would have given for so admirable and graceful a daughter of the hills, or how many sonnets he would have indited in her praise. The least touch of self-consciousness or momentary awkwardness, venial enough in any young rustic matron under the circumstances, would have marred the effect. But there was not a trace of it here. The average village belle, of such physical advantages as this one still eminently possessed, would have considered herself as thrown away on such a howling social desert. This tall, fair-haired girl, with her blue eyes and well-chiselled, cherubic face, had no quarrel with solitude, nor quite obviously any suspicion that she was not quite as the wives of other shepherds and hinds. She spread our simple meal in quite dainty fashion in the room where the washtubs were not, and with much more despatch than those better-provided dames who in more frequented districts furnish teas to tourists at a shilling a head. Then retiring, with apologies to her tubs, she discoursed with some

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humour and gaiety through the open door of her last annual visit to Alnwick with the bairns, while we did justice to her fare, amid the repeated assaults of a well-grown pet lamb, whose ambition was apparently to dislodge us from our respective situations.







BAMBERG CASTLE

## CHAPTER V

### BAMBURGH AND HOLY ISLAND

THE normal method of procedure for the pilgrim to Bamburgh is by train on the main line to Chatthill, the next station to Christon Bank ; thence a light railway conveys him to Seahouses, a hamlet on the coast, where the fact that it cures as well as catches fish proclaims itself unmistakably at the first moment of alighting. Here a limited and irregular supply of vehicles await a modest but quite incalculable demand for them, and ply along the sea-coast to Bamburgh, three and a half miles distant. The situation is therefore one familiar enough to the British sightseer in rural places, and always painful to the sensitive, the leisurely, and the polite. For success when the supply is not equal to the demand is to the swift alone, or rather, to the prompt and to that genius for arriving at a much-contested seat, that I have sometimes watched with admiration at Piccadilly Circus on the approach of the tea-hour, when the Kensington ladies in their battalions are homeward bound, and each halting omnibus brings out the expert and the country cousin in such fine relief. The only occasion on which circumstances compelled me to this method of reaching the ancient capital of Northumbria, I was with an expert, a lady, whereas I was myself not even placed, and consequently in such a dilemma that there was no room for ceremony, and a stout gentleman had to take me on his knee, whether he liked it or not.

From Embleton, however, it is much pleasanter to take the road at once, and follow its devious windings through the large grass-farms that wave smoothly along the sea-coast.

It is about eight miles to Seahouses, or, rather, North Sunderland, which is practically the same thing, and is not a particularly memorable route, nor does it even touch the sea-shore at any point. There are no woods to speak of, nor any country houses upon it, nor even any churches, unless the scanty ruins of the Norman chapel of Tuggall, for which you must grope somewhat, count for such. This last, however, is a little relic of high historic repute. For when the monks of Durham in 1069 fled before a Danish invasion, taking the body of St. Cuthbert with them to Holy Island, they rested here, and this building was raised to commemorate the fact. It is therefore interesting to archæologists also, as one of the oldest churches in Northumberland, small and ruinous though it be. Its most interesting feature is a Norman arch of unusual fashion dividing the nave and chancel. The historian coming in again, tells us that the bishops and monks on the aforesaid occasion expected to be properly entertained by the wealthy owner of the surrounding acres, one Gillomichael. But this inhospitable churl turned the prelate and all his company, together with St. Cuthbert's shrine, into his barn for the night, while he sat with his friends in his own hall drinking deep potations out of golden cups. It cost him dear, for on the next day his homestead took fire and was burnt to the ground, even as the holy men with their sacred charge were wending their way to Bamburgh. Tuggall Hall, too, no doubt on the site of the almost sacrilegious orgies of Gillomichael, is an old abiding-place of armigers—I forget who—and now a comparatively venerable as well as ample farmhouse, flanked with the generous buildings of a later day. On a windy, uplifted promontory, too, just beyond, over the neck of which the road climbs, the once famous Northumbrian race of Swinhoe are curiously commemorated in two great homesteads of the modern type, occupying the same perch and at such close quarters as to suggest, in the approach, a quite considerable village. For the rest we have everywhere the same wide, sweeping rectangles of pasture, varied occasionally by grain or roots; the

same Northumbrian hedges bending their straggling tops to the wind, that whistles freely through the bare stems which support it ; the same noble lines of haycocks, weighing a ton or so apiece ; and the same clouds of lapwings " tiring the echoes with unvaried cries," while through the midst of it all a little trout stream, born away somewhere in the Chatton moors, sparkles cheerfully toward the sea over its pebbly bed.

Haymaking in Northumbria, and to the north of it, is not the exact science it is in the south. Without much ceremony the hay is dragged into the above-mentioned " pikes," and left thus to decorate the fields in which it grew for a considerable period. In due course each pike is dragged bodily with ropes on to a " bogey " or species of sled, and thus hauled direct to the steading. The older Northumbrians say that in their climate grass will not dry out sufficiently on the ground or in small cocks for immediate stacking after the southern fashion. East Northumberland is not appreciably wetter than the rest of the east coast, while there is, of course, longer sunshine, if of a less burning quality than to the southward. Personally, I have a profound belief in local customs. Incredible though it seems, I have witnessed the discomfiture of even Scottish agriculturists in other climes by a contempt for what looks at the first blush primeval methods. But there is one thing to be said in this case, for giants in agriculture as these men between the Tyne and Firth have been, and sometimes still are, they were not, as a class, till recently, haymakers beyond the seeds and clover that came in the rotation of tillage farming and, indeed, may almost be said to have despised it. I should not venture even to hint that they may not be entirely right in their poor opinion of their native sun were it not that more than one young farmer of my acquaintance holds it to be an ancient superstition, though, I dare say, their hands would all strike on the spot if they put their belief into practical shape. At any rate, the outer covering of every ton of hay drawn to the stacks in Northumberland is more or less spoilt. It is pleasant, too, to see the women in the big fields of Northumberland and

Berwickshire. I do not mean merely in the haying season, when you may see female amateurs similarly employed anywhere in the south—while to the rosy-faced stalwart Northumbrian bondagers the hay harvest must be a sort of frolic. What a fearful ring the word *bondager* must have to a southern ear! One might fancy that the gorge of the member for Little Peddlington would long ago have risen at the sound, and that such a fine war-cry for enhancing his political reputation and discoursing on matters he knew nothing about would have been irresistible. One can only suppose it has not reached him. The bondager is peculiarly a Northumbrian survival—the term, I mean, not the woman—as a field worker. She is to-day far more numerous north of the Tweed, as the grass movement must, unfortunately, have enormously curtailed her employment, but that is a detail. She does not work here to eke out a scanty living for an ill-fed family of children, parents, or sisters, but because she is used to it and likes it, and makes for herself almost the wage of a Wiltshire labourer, without the burden of his incidental expenses. Her men folk, both in wage and kind, make from twenty-two to twenty-five shillings a week, inclusive of allowances, and she usually makes twelve shillings. If you saw her, dear reader, with her bounding health, her blooming cheeks, her cheery look, her brawny arms, and her warm useful garb, you would not wish to make a draggled, discontented, pale-faced housewife of her—prematurely aged in, too often, ill-conceived attempts to make both ends meet, with a hankering for doorstep gossip and tawdry finery, though the bondager, too, can dress on Sundays and can well afford it.

But Seahouses and North Sunderland—practically the same place, the former, at least, with its fishing folk as exclusive in their social commerce as its prototypes down the coast—are again with us. Following the long straight road behind the narrow range of rolling dunes, betwixt which the sea twinkles anon, its blue surface flecked here and there with the red sail of a fishing-boat, the basalt crag of the Flame-bearer crowned with its amazing load of towers, fills the eye with increasing

grandeur at each stage of our approach. It is now high summer, but an autumn day comes back to me on this same shore road when the fern-clad dunes were aflame with gold, and the sea lay behind them with glassy surface unstirred by the faintest breath of air. And close to the shore the whole of the Scottish herring-fleet lay hopelessly becalmed on their southern voyage—some forty or fifty vessels floating motionless and at all angles within biscuit-throw of one another. Their full red sails hung listlessly from the spars, and the whole great array of bright canvas lay reflected in the shining sea as in a mirror, a felicitous grouping of hull and canvas rarely offered to a stray wanderer on a lonely shore, and not often, I imagine, even to a marine painter in search of subjects. A week afterwards we read in the papers that these Scotsmen had been caught in a north-east gale off the coast of Norfolk, and that two of them, failing to make either Yarmouth or Lowestoft, had foundered and sunk.

Bamburgh castle, as a mere spectacle, has no rival in Britain; and in the significance of ancient story, scarcely any. It combines the vastness of Alnwick or Caerphilly with the pose of Harlech or Cerrig Cennen. For it stands in sublime isolation on a huge whinstone crag some one hundred and fifty feet above the waves which break at its feet, while on the landward side the cliff is so precipitous that a coin dropped from some of the castle windows would fall directly upon the green far below. The ridge is long and narrow, planted broadside as it were to the sea, while either end, both north and south, dips to the level at a slope sufficient to give access to the castle by winding roads. Bamburgh, to be sure, has been restored, and in that particular Dunstanburgh or Harlech has an advantage over it. But though one would fain have seen it twenty years ago, it is still superb. The great square Norman keep raised in the time of Henry the Second upon the apex of the bluff is original; so are some of the outlying towers, while a good deal of the curtain wall enclosing in all eight acres of ground has only been patched and strengthened. Lord Armstrong is the present owner

and the restorer. All that wealth and taste can do to retain the spirit of the past in converting the castle into an occasional residence has been done, and the new block of towers and curtains are reared above the precipice at the south side, leaving the ancient keep still isolated and dominant. In the latter, the old castle well, one hundred and fifty feet deep, is still kept open. The imposing main gateway to the castle, hewn through the solid rock on the side of the sea, is in form unaltered. The village lies below and away from the sea, and chiefly consists of a wide main street bordered with pleasant, mostly old-fashioned, well-cared-for houses, expanding in fan-like shape for the better enclosure of an ample grove of trees. Altogether a place far above the average of Northumbrian villages, with its church, both interesting and ancient, set back in a wide open grave-yard at the head of the street and looking out over the sea.

It would be hard to say which is the more inspiring—that broadside view of the castle, which fronts inland towards the village, with its quarter of a mile of Norman masonry clinging to the edge of the precipice, or the lengthwise prospect from the north, with waves breaking on the rocks below, and the older buildings grouping themselves in gradual ascent to the commanding keep. But we must bear in mind that even the hoariest of these towers and curtains only represent one of the greatest of Border castles. For the full significance of Bamburgh we must sweep them away, and crown the mighty rock with whatever may be our conception of Saxon defence and habitation when Saxon kings were seated there. Mr. Freeman was not a word painter, nor an impressionist, but he said a great deal in very little sometimes, and that little, in his moments of exceptional inspiration, was moving, dignified, and sufficient; the more eloquent in its very brevity, not merely as coming from a full heart, but out of such abounding knowledge. Unrestored Bamburgh, one of the cradles of that race for whose virtues and virility he pleaded so hard and thundered so loud, moved him even above most of its ancient seats. The humble pilgrim, therefore, may well

feel abashed, and keep his emotions to himself when gazing upon what was once, in a sense, the capital of England, since Bamburgh was the capital of Northumbria during its brief ascendancy over the sister kingdoms. It was, at any rate, the cradle whence Saxon conquest and Latin Christianity spread over a good part of northern England. All we know for certain of its architecture is that it was enclosed with a pallisade, a procedure which the most elementary knowledge of Saxon fortification would have assumed. Its Celtic name, whatever use the Celts may have actually made of its impregnable heights, was Dinguardi. We also know that this was changed to Bebbanburg, the origin of its present form, in honour of Bebba, the second wife and widow of Ethelfrid, who, in 607, fell in the heady pursuit of distant conquests at Northampton. It may also be accounted a further note of local inspiration that Dinguardi was to figure in Authrian romance, which is strong in Northumbria, as Joyeuse Garde.

It is a curious thing, and accepted as reasonably true, that Ida, the first Saxon settler and founder of Bamburgh, who reigned here eighteen years, was succeeded in rotation by his six sons, whose brief careers may be safely attributed to a passion for arms and redoubtable foes rather than to any lack of constitution. For the Britons and Picts to the west and north pressed them sorely, and for one brief moment actually expelled them from Bamburgh to a temporary refuge beyond the tide-washed sands on Lindisfarne or Holy Island. But it was the fiercest of them all, Hussa, called by his foes Flamdwyn, the torch or flame-bearer, who was thus driven to bay. In the moment of his victory, too, the much-sung-of Urien, the leader of the Celtic alliance, though himself but Lord of Redesdale, was killed by a traitor in his own ranks and in a short time the pendulum swung back. Hussa carried his torch and his sword far into the Celtic country, and restored the terror of his name by vanquishing and slaying Owen, "Chief of the glittering West." It was Ethelfrid in the next generation, called by the Britons, Fles, or the destroyer, who, uniting in his government the kingdoms of



Bernicia and Deira, carried his arms as far as the Welsh border.

Oswald, the first Christian king, who some fifty years later won the battle of Hevenfield on the Roman wall near Hexham, as already related, by the sudden conversion of his army, held court at Bamburgh. A popular legend relates how, as he sat feasting in the castle on Easter day with Bishop Aidan, whom he had imported to convert his people, he was told that the street below was swarming with starving poor; whereupon he distributed not only the meats but actually the gold and silver plate that adorned the table among them. Upon this the bishop seized the king's hand, and, blessing it, declared that it should never perish, and henceforward he was known even amongst his enemies as Oswald of the Fair Hand. The lingering flavour of his piety may be said, even after his death, to have saved his capital from destruction. For after he had fallen under the fierce pressure of the Welsh and Mercians, led by Penda, the latter piled burning brushwood in such quantities around the fortress that its ruin seemed inevitable, when Aidan, from his lonely refuge on the Farne Islands three miles away, brought about a timely change of wind, and saved the situation. He died soon afterwards, propped up, we are told, against the west end of his wooden church in the village of Bamburgh. The same night, far away in Lauderdale, a shepherd, guarding his flocks, beheld the spirit of the Saint of Lindisfarne being carried aloft by angels, and vowed thereupon to devote his life to Christ. The shepherd was no less than the famous Cuthbert, who became, in due course, Prior of Melrose, and afterwards Bishop of Lindisfarne, and patron saint of Durham. He was a contemporary of the other great Northumbrian saint, Wilfrid, Bishop of Hexham, for Cuthbert was actually born near Wooler. About the middle of the eighth century, the boundaries of Northumberland being much contracted to the north of the Tweed, its capital was shifted from Bamburgh to Corbridge on the Tyne, and so much of its glory lessened. But I have said enough, perhaps, in a former chapter of those

Saxon doings that gave the great rock fortress its first and greatest importance.

Yet this last statement needs some qualifying, for when Northumbria became an earldom, and reached again from the Humber to the Forth under the West Saxon kings, Bamburgh became the vice-regal court, the base of military action, the central object of hostile attack. From the time when William the Conqueror made his desolating march through Northumberland, the castle was a rallying-place in the interminable wars, local and national, that raged unceasingly in the north, and almost every crowned head and warrior of note for centuries had something to say to it.

A sensational incident, too, in its history was when William Rufus, who had recently annexed Cumberland—a Scottish fief—to England, was besieging Mowbray, the rebellious Earl of Northumberland. For other methods proving futile, the king erected a huge wooden fort, known as a “malvoisin,” close to the castle, and compelled his knights to assist the rank and file in its erection. Many of them had apparently sworn to join the earl in his revolt, and the latter had the consolation of jeering at these noble persons from the walls, and calling them by name as they toiled at their ignoble task. The humiliation of the coerced aristocrats was intensified by hearing their guilty intentions thus disclosed in trumpet tones, and the king is said to have derived immense enjoyment from their discomfiture. It was the last little bit of diversion poor Mowbray was ever to enjoy. The king went to Wales on similar business, but he left his “bad neighbour” completed and garrisoned, sticking to Bamburgh like a burr, and Mowbray could do nothing. Leaving his wife, therefore, in charge, he slipped off to Newcastle to try his luck there, but found himself a prisoner instead of a leader; so when Rufus came back to his malvoisin he was able to take Mowbray with him, and threaten to put out his eyes in front of the castle if the countess did not give it up; and the threat proving effectual, the earl himself was imprisoned for life.

David Bruce, among others, was brought here from the

battle of Neville's Cross, with an arrow sticking in him, which two York chirurgeons ultimately extracted. In the Wars of the Roses, Bamburgh was defended by the Duke of Somerset and Ralph Percy against the great Earl of Warwick. Queen Margaret herself escaped from the fortress with a French fleet, which was driven ashore by a storm on Holy Island, and the queen, with her French friends, being pressed by the Yorkist army, escaped in a fishing-boat to Berwick. Bamburgh fell on Christmas Eve, but was seized again shortly afterwards in the Lancastrian interest by the Scots and French, with whom Queen Margaret returned, as well as the unfortunate Henry, the royal pair having escaped from a stampede of their friends at Norham, and wandered for five days with scarcely bread to eat. Once more the queen sailed with a French convoy for the Continent, while Henry held his court at Bamburgh for nine brief months of comparative quiet, till the Yorkists became active again, and carrying Dunstanburgh by storm, put Henry in such peril that, fearful of being entrapped, he and his party cut their way through and escaped.

In the time of Elizabeth, Bamburgh came under the rule of the Forsters, who figured so prominently and profited so much during the long suppression of their great neighbours, the Percies. First as Wardens of the March, and then as owners by deed of James the First, of the castle and manor, they are wholly identified with it. Three generations of endeavour, it may be supposed, to live up to such an illustrious possession, or at any rate of lavish expenditure, found them early in the eighteenth century face to face with bankruptcy. Thrown on the market by order of the court, the estates were purchased by Lord Crewe, the Bishop of Durham, who late in life married a lady of the Forster family. The bishop's exalted ecclesiastical position had been due in great measure to his good looks and agreeable qualities. A favourite of Charles the Second and his brother, he was made Bishop of Durham at the age of forty-two, and became a staunch supporter of James in his unpopular measures. He continued

to flourish at court, though naturally with less prominence, through the reigns of Dutch William, Anne, and into that of George the First, being nearly ninety when he died. A courtier, and an influential one when there was any sunshine for him to bask in, he was, nevertheless, a zealous and conscientious prelate. He maintained a state worthy of the traditions of Durham, but exercised at the same time both widespread and judicious charities. When his youth was urged as his disqualification for its episcopal throne, Charles replied with characteristic gaiety, that it was a fault he would mend of every day. At fifty-eight, still unwedded, he proposed marriage to Dorothea, daughter of Sir William Forster, of Bamburgh, a local beauty, whose portrait may be seen in the castle, and who blushing urged that "she was too young," and stuck to it. Having succeeded in matrimony elsewhere, but in the mean time lost his wife, his lordship came back to Bamburgh, and proposed again to his first love, now ten years older. She accepted him this time, as all readers of Besant's novel, "Dorothy Forster," will remember. He had now succeeded to the title of his brother, the first baron, and was a very great personage indeed, as well as a wealthy, and, I should think, a wise one. Most of all, perhaps, he shone in the making of his will, of which a word immediately. But in the mean time one of the least, probably, of the Forsters achieved a name more familiar to posterity than any other of that enduring and locally conspicuous stock, namely, that Thomas Forster, junior, general-in-chief of the rising of 1715. He is quite an historical figure, if an extremely uninteresting one, but for the conspicuous situation that, after all, was none of his seeking. Indeed, his individual performance almost touched the verge of comic opera, if in a measure redeemed from it by the devotion of his heroic sister, provided that we may accept the story of the younger Dorothy, niece of the other, unreservedly. The tale of the 'fifteen belongs rather to Dilston, the seat of the Derwentwater family, and to Blanchland, the home of young Forster at that time. It is rather a pitiable story, the

English part of it, and much of its pathos attaches to the ill-fated earl, at whose deserted halls we shall later on shed the tributary tear, and doubtless be moved to talk of him. It will be enough for the moment that Thomas Forster, senior, the first of the disinherited Forsters, was living at Adderstone, near Bamburgh, in comparative poverty, helped, we may fairly suppose, by his rich clerical uncle, and that it was his son, an average young man, without worldly knowledge, of sporting habit, and a good Northumbrian burr, as the warrant for his arrest politely hints, that became so fortuitously immortal.

But as he became an outlaw on the Continent, and there were no Forsters sufficiently near the bishop to engage his interest, the latter left the Bamburgh estates to various charities, which to this day are known and administered as the Crewe Trust, and all admirable in application; such as the augmentation of poor livings, the erection of churches, the support of education, the relief of the poor, the maintenance of a lifeboat and other helpful precautions connected with the dangers of this stormy coast. Sixty years ago the income had increased to the sum of £10,000 a year, and is now, no doubt, very much more. I imagine as a magnificent private charity it is somewhat unique, and for over a century and a half the ruined towers of Bamburgh were its romantic headquarters and the centre of its distribution. The recent purchase of the estate, or part of it, by Lord Armstrong has, no doubt altered to some extent the machinery of the Trust, but that is quite irrelevant to these pages.

A notable administrator of the Crewe Trust in the middle of the eighteenth century was Dr. Sharp, Archdeacon of Northumberland and Vicar of Bamburgh, who made part of the castle habitable, lived in it, and bequeathed to it his library and added money to the endowment; while in his day, and for long afterwards, some thirty odd girls were supported there from childhood and trained to service. Finally, it may be noted that under present arrangements the castle,

which contains a good many relics of olden times, is open to visitors once a week.

Looking seaward from the inner bailey of the castle, the Farne islands lie some three miles away and nearly two from the mainland, a striking group over twenty in number, the smaller ones mere outlying fragments of rock, but sufficient, with anything of a breeze from the north or east, to provoke a greater fury in the advancing waves. Ever since sea coal fires were burnt there in the time of the Stuarts for the guidance of mariners, till now when lighthouses and a fog-horn proclaim the whereabouts of this wide-wandering archipelago, the Farne have been a conspicuous feature in North Sea navigation. But they have been a great deal more than this. For on the nearest, some twelve acres or more in extent, which presents the line of a sheer black cliff some hundred feet high along its visible shore, saints, bishops, canons, deans, and holy men of all kinds, have been temporary or protracted sojourners. Here St. Aidan used to retire from Lindisfarne for weeks of prayer and private encounters with Satan, and it was from this point, it may be remembered, he shifted the wind when Penda's fires threatened destruction to Bamburgh. Here came his successor at Lindisfarne, St. Cuthbert, for whole years—nine it is said—of hard fare and pious meditation. The venerable Bede, who, it may be remembered, was by residence a Tynesider, describes the simple establishment of the saint, his circular hut and oratory, his larger dwelling for the entertainment of his visitors. On the few acres of the island that are not solid rock he raised crops of bere, while fish and fowl—the latter swarming here even now, if not of a tasty kind—were plentiful. King Egfrid and the Archbishop of Canterbury braved the terrors of the passage to solicit his acceptance of the Bishopric of Hexham. But either from preternatural modesty, or because he had his eye on his own diocese of Lindisfarne, he resisted their importunities till the offer of the latter relieved him from any more of them. But even the dignities of high office could not altogether wean him from his storm-beaten rock. For

in no long time he returned there, only to die after a few weeks of suffering and solitude. His body was brought to Lindisfarne, and buried near the altar in its abbey. Fired by the example of the pious Cuthbert, a succession of hermits, sometimes singly and sometimes in couples, who often fell out, occupied the sacred spot. A monk in the time of Henry the Second spent over forty years there. The last hermit appears to have been a Prior of Durham, whom the Chapter elected bishop against the wishes of Henry the Third. This, no doubt, was in one of the many interludes of his harassed reign, when it seemed safe to take liberties with him; and we may assume that it was when he had shaken off his barons for the moment that the home-made bishop found it prudent to take ship for the Farne. After this, the spot seems to have been constituted a regular cell for two monks in connection with Durham, and thus continued till the Dissolution. The tale of all these adventurous and pious landowners causes me some shame in the admission that I never got to the Farne. A three-mile row from North Sunderland sounds a simple matter on paper, but some previous formalities have to be gone through; the tides are strong, and the weather must be of a tranquil and settled description, or your sojourn there may be prolonged indefinitely; and though the lighthouse keepers have no doubt sufficient accommodation for their families, and you would not be reduced to sheltering amid the ruins of the monkish cells, which still, I believe, survive, it is not a situation to be rashly courted.

A very fair idea, however, of these barren islands may be gained through a glass from the mainland, the only other inhabited one being the most remote, and three miles from the nearer haunt of refugee bishops and monks and lighthouse keepers. This, however, is a mere low-lying rock, the Longstone, on which stands the lighthouse famous as the home of the heroic Grace Darling, and the scene of her deservedly immortal exploit. In later times we have become possibly not less heroic, but a little hysterical, and have had to reconsider one or two partly press-made heroes and

heroines ; but neither time nor reflection can ever dim the fame of this one.

It was on September 5, 1838, that the steamer *Forfarshire*, of three hundred tons, was on her way from Hull to Dundee, and ran into a fierce north-east gale at the mouth of the Firth. Her engines broke down, and she drifted helplessly back before the storm through the dark night, and was driven at three o'clock in the morning on to the Harcar rocks, about half a mile inside the solitary lighthouse occupied by Grace Darling, her father and mother. Nine of the crew, either then or just before, lowered a boat, and by good luck got safely away and were picked up by a vessel, to cut a somewhat poor figure in the public eye at the subsequent inquiry.

In the meanwhile, the *Forfarshire*, which carried over sixty souls, including twenty-two passengers, had broken in half within three minutes of the shock before the irresistible force of the waves. Her after part, with most of those on board, was swept away to destruction down a roaring channel known as Piper's Gut, while the fore part broke up in a quarter of an hour, leaving nine survivors clinging to the bare rock on which the ship had struck. The sea swept over these helpless souls continuously, tearing the very clothes off their backs, while two children of eight and eleven respectively perished of exposure, with their hands gripped in those of their mother. At daylight, or soon after, the wreck and the figures about it were descried by the Darlings from their lighthouse windows. The father, brave seaman though he was, seems to have held any attempt to reach them in his "cobble" as hopeless, in such a place and in such a sea, though a contemporary account says he actually put out by himself and was beaten back. His daughter Grace, however, then twenty years of age and of slight physique, though skilled at the oar, overbore his most natural hesitation and taking the other oar herself, the two launched themselves on to a sea whose terrors an hour or two later prevented the North Sunderland lifeboat from completing a crew. After a hard struggle the gallant pair reached the rock with its half-perished burden. Darling



himself was safely landed, while the girl pushed off and kept the cobble away from the rocks and out in the sea till the benumbed wretches were prepared to make the risky venture of boarding her. Some of them, however, were sailors, and when the feat, after much difficulty, had been safely accomplished, their help at the oars was invaluable, or, as Darling himself declared, they could never have returned in the face of the tide. But this too was at length effected in safety, and the rescued people, imprisoned by the sea for three days in the lighthouse, were kindly ministered to by their rescuers. When a volunteer crew of seven men in a large cobble from Sunderland, after great difficulty, reached the wreck which had been observed from the shore, the work of rescue had been accomplished. They were unable to return, however, and were compelled to seek refuge in the already crowded lighthouse for the forty-eight hours during which the storm raged.

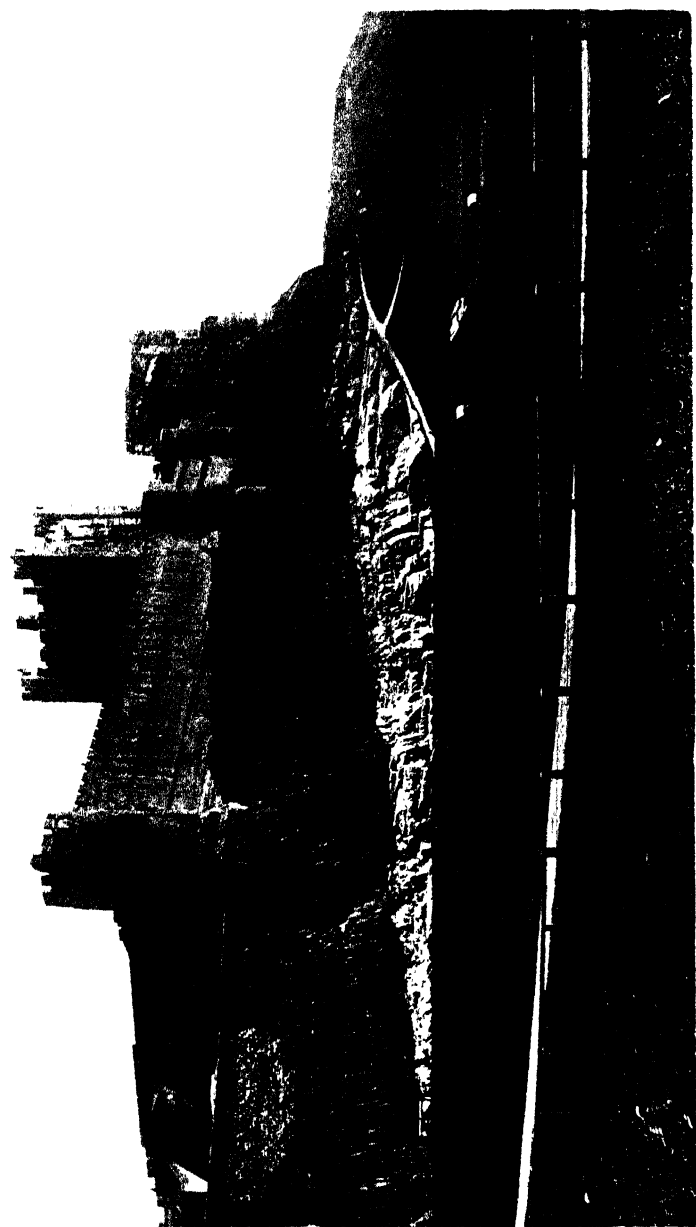
The fame of Grace Darling's achievement rang throughout England. Meetings were held, subscriptions raised, medals struck, and poets, from Wordsworth downwards, sounded her praises. She was offered £20 a night to sit on a paste-board wreck at the Adelphi theatre, but, unlike a certain Highland piper not long ago, scorned the notion, as she also did the offers of marriage which, it is said, poured in on her. In short she stoutly refused to leave her lighthouse home till, developing signs of consumption, the doctor ordered her off her native element to Wooler, under the Cheviots, whither invalids in those days used to resort for the drinking of goat's-milk wey. She died in 1842, at the age of twenty-five, just four years after her fame, for which she cared so little, had begun. She is described by those who knew her as small, plain, and modest, but with a quite extraordinary sweetness of expression. She lies in the churchyard of Bamburgh, her native village, under a canopy which also protects a replica of her original effigy; the latter having been removed, on account of the injurious action of the weather, to the north aisle of the church, where it now lies beneath a stained-glass window.

The building itself, dedicated to, nay, founded in the original by St. Aidan, who, as related, died in it, is among the more notable Northumberland churches. It is cruciform in shape, and of ample dimensions, with an "engaged" square tower at the west end. The present building is of the twelfth century and consists of a nave, two unequal aisles and a chancel with short transepts. The arches of the nave are pointed, resting on slight cylindrical piers. The tower, which has a vaulted roof, opens into the nave and aisles with three low, deeply moulded pointed arches. The chancel, an exceptionally long one, is lit by seven and four lancet windows on the south and north side respectively, but the lancet arcading is continuous along both sides, as well as across the east end, which contains three more windows of the same kind. In the chancel, too, are some oak sedilia behind railings. A curious trefoil "leper" window near the floor attracts one's notice, through which plague-smitten persons are supposed to have received the sacraments, and opposite to it there is a square hagioscope of unusual form, crossed with stone tracery. On the wall is a tablet to Sir Claudius Forster, the first owner of the castle, and a monument to William, John and that Ferdinando Forster who was slain by Fenwick of Rock at Newcastle. This was placed here by the elder Dorothy Lady Crew, "being the only one remaining of the family, as a last respect that could be paid them for their affection to the church, the monarchy, their country, and their sister." Here, too, rests the helmet and a breastplate, said to be those of the unfortunate Ferdinando. There is an interesting vaulted crypt of two chambers beneath the church, which formerly served as the Forster vault, and here were deposited, besides the coffins of the above named, those also of the hapless General of the 'fifteen and his heroic, or, at least, brave and spirited sister, the younger Dorothy. It is curious beyond measure that two women who, in different spheres of life, though by quite different standards of heroism, have won fame and immortality should rest in the same remote country graveyard—the Forsters being now all buried under the vault.

Indeed, the heroism of Grace Darling seems to make us boggle somewhat at making a heroine of Dorothy Forster, but in any other company she could certainly, and I think reasonably, claim that title.

But for all the richness of its past and the distinction of its site, Bamburgh has no small attraction for those who only concern themselves with to-day and to-morrow. A quiet resort it must, however, of necessity remain for its very limitations, though every corner and both its small hotels are, I believe, pre-empted long before its little tidal wave of summer visitors actually breaks upon it. There is a cheerful little sandy bay to the north of the castle and hard by the village, overlooked by verdure-clad hills and protected somewhat by rocky reefs, which bound it and make fine sport for the waves in the stormy weather. It boasts also a comparatively new but most promising golf course, with all necessary appurtenances. It is not quite the real thing, to be sure, as the links, using the term in its generic sense, shrink to quite narrow limits at Bamburgh and, on the north side, cease altogether for a time, the coast swelling upwards in grassy sweeps to hilltops crowned with ragged rock, so it is more in the nature of a down course overhanging the sea. But, as he pursues his round, the less critical golfer will, no doubt, find consolation in the glorious outlooks spread before his eyes from the higher greens, when he has duly laid his approach shot on them, and again when he has holed or missed his put. If it is a windy day, and the tide is flowing, he will see far beneath him the waves surging up in long successive lines of foam, pouring over the sandy bar and sweeping up the deep quiet bay of Budle, and just beyond it the long stretch of Holy Island—now near at hand with its abbey ruins and high-perched castle—while to the west is the bold group of the Cheviots, and to the north the low dim outline of the Lammermuirs beyond the Tweed.

And Budle Bay reminds me that Bamburgh has a dragon legend, known as "the laidly worm," or, in more lucid utterance, the loathly serpent, of Spindleston heugh, "a craggy



BAMBERG



spot not far from Bamburgh, and in the neighbourhood of the Waren burn, a small stream which flows into Budle Bay. An ancient ballad, composed by one Duncan Fraser, living on Cheviot in the days of Bruce, seems to be the authority for the tale, and in a more modern shape it jingles quaintly through fifty verses embalmed in Northumbrian lore. It seems that a king living at Bamburgh, a widower with a beautiful daughter, brought home after a time a second wife who, though of comely form, was in truth a witch. Jealous of the girl's beauty she turned her into a serpent, that nothing could restore to human shape but the problematical re-appearance of her brother, Childe Wynd, from foreign parts. The laidly worm in the mean time took up its abode in Spindleston heugh, where it consumed the milk of seven cows, and poisoned all the land.

" For seven miles east and seven miles west,  
And seven miles north and south,  
No blade of grass or corn could grow,  
So venomous was her mouth."

In course of time, however, the Childe Wynd heard what grievous things were happening on his native soil and, calling his merry men, he built a ship with masts of the rowan tree, a wood proof against witchcraft, and when the queen saw his ship coming she worked her spells against it in vain, and the Childe ran it successfully ashore on Budle Bay, where the laidly worm was gyrating in threatening and fantastic fashion. The valiant Childe, however, drawing his "berry-brown sword," advanced to the combat, when the monster thus addressed him—

" Oh, quit thy sword, and bend thy bow,  
And give me kisses three :  
For though I am a poisonous worm,  
No hurt I'll do to thee."

So the Childe Wynd, no doubt having more cause for confidence than the reader might suspect, duly embraced the laidly worm, as he was told, whereat it crawled into its lair to emerge almost immediately as the long-lost and beautiful

Margaret. The pair then hied them joyfully to the castle to the consternation of the wicked queen, whom the Childe, after giving her a piece of his mind and possessing himself some turn of magic, transformed into a toad.

"Now on the sand near Ida's tower  
She crawls a loathsome toad,  
And venom spits on every maid  
She meets upon her road."

These serpent legends are prominent in Border lore. The Manor of Sockburn-on-Tees was held by the falcion with which the ancestral Conyers had slain the worm, or serpent, which kept the neighbourhood in terror. As late as 1826 the Prince Bishop of Durham, when he entered his diocese, was met on the middle of the bridge by the Lord of this Manor, and presented with the historic sword and a recapitulation of its significance and achievement, after which he returned it with complimentary and suitable words. The Lambton worm slain on the Wear by a crusading ancestor of the Durham family, after a tremendous struggle in which the river ran red with gore, and the nine succeeding generations of Lambtons who duly fulfilled the Sybil's prophecy that none of them should die in their beds, is a yet more notable story and was an article of faith in Weardale till the eighteenth century. Just over the Cheviots, too, in Roxburghshire, the worm's hole of Linton recalls the exploit of a Somerville, who was granted the estate by William the Lion, and whose descendants held it for centuries by a like service. These monsters, however, were not bred only in the north. The serpent of Bromfield, near Ludlow, slain at last by the incantations of an Oriental, and a similar dragon vanquished at Denbigh by the stout John Salusbury came back to me with a vision of their ancient haunts.

Holy Island, the ancient Lindisfarne, is an object of pilgrimage which every one makes an effort to achieve, and it is well worth it. There is only one recognized method of accomplishment and it also happens to be the most stimulating, which is not always the case in following conventional grooves. The island is severed from the mainland by some

three miles of wet, holding, and rather muddy sand, which is covered by the sea for some hours at every tide. In the intervals, however, there is ample time to drive across, spend two or three hours on the island, and return again. The little station of Beal on the main line just north of Belford which, by the way, thus serves Bamburgh, is only a mile from the crossing place, and from here the jarveys ply into whose hands you commit yourself for a passage that might be exciting if they were not so familiar with it. In the neighbourhood of Beal station, too, innumerable passengers bound for Scotland must have rubbed their eyes at a spectacle that is certainly unique in these islands, to wit, a herd of American buffalo peacefully grazing in the pastures adjoining the line. It gave me, as in no wise prepared for it, no little of a shock. These animals, which are attached to Haggerstone castle, always seem to me, as a mere passer-by, to be as peaceful and domesticated as the scant survivors of their race in the paddocks at Banff in the Rocky mountains. A local friend, however, who once had a guest from those parts and thought to give him some passing entertainment by an interview with the Northumbrian species under the wing of the owner or his representative had rather too much diversion. For, in spite of this personal introduction, so to speak, the animals, being perhaps annoyed at something, proved ungracious and, to use an expressive Northumbrian phrase, shifted all three of them with much expedition out of the pasture.

The state of the tide regulates, of necessity, your day and hour for adventuring Holy Island, and the vehicles awaiting fares at Beal station are, of course, in accord with the same changeable conditions. A two-wheeled dogcart fell to our lot, and with the driver we just filled it. The tide had receded some time as we left the shore and following the long row of stakes which mark the wet track, started on the somewhat tedious progress which is mainly taken at a walk. The heaviness even at that pace of the draught made us feel how hopeless would be a race with the in-coming sea under such circumstances. At the northern opening of the channel the



surf was breaking, and the complete hull of a vessel, which the driver said had been cast ashore many years ago, loomed up conspicuously against the sky. It was autumn on this occasion, and in the broad shallows to the south toward Budle Bay several punt gunners were afloat, a species of sport for which Holy Island is somewhat famed. But their prospects in the still atmosphere and the bright sunlight seemed to me more than dubious. One or two pedestrian fowlers were abroad on the wet flats, whose chances seemed equally hopeless. But the driver intimated that the method of these humbler sportsmen when they meant business was to "howk a hole" in the sand and there secrete themselves. There were scarcely any wildfowl on the wing, but otherwise the conditions were favourable to quiet enjoyment, and particularly for our purposes. The ladies of our party thought it would be fine fun to drive back through the in-flowing tide, a procedure not unusual, I believe. The driver, a taciturn youth, gave them to understand that it was quite possible their wish would be gratified, a prospect I admit I did not hail with particular enthusiasm, having regard to the nature of our cargo, the heaviness of the going, and the labouring of the horse. Ladies are apt to be reckless in the hunting field till they have had one bad fall, and on the water till they have been once immersed. I noted with a qualified measure of relief a roomy box on a platform supported far aloft on stout stakes, whence a ladder descended, the purpose of which was unmistakable. This eyrie of refuge seemed capable of holding three persons at a pinch, which was also well. Twenty years ago, in celebration of the twelfth centenary of St. Cuthbert, thousands of persons from every quarter of Britain, professing the ancient faith, made a pilgrimage of state across these three miles of sand. They marched bare-footed, or "plodged," though the most secular persons on ordinary occasions and for obvious reasons do likewise, bearing banners and led by chaunting priests and monks in full canonicals, an altogether memorable and striking spectacle I am assured by those who beheld it.

As regards its shape, the island may be roughly described as a square of two miles in diameter, with a narrow sandy spit flung out more than halfway across the northern entrance to the channel and towards the mainland. Much of it is of good quality and under cultivation or grass, the rest is dunes. The surface is virtually level, and, with the exception of the castle and a small farm-house or two, the whole population of some five hundred souls is concentrated in the ancient and quite considerable village, which, at the south-west corner, clusters round the parish church and the splendid ruins of the Abbey. Here is some approach to a market square, with two or three visible inns and a good deal of red tile and thatched roof and whitewash, which gives the low houses an air of unconventionality suitable to the rambling nature of a village that has never been trammelled by any particular limits, nor had to adapt itself to any through traffic worth mentioning. Here, too, is a place that can never know the throb of a motor. In the middle of the square is a modern cross, resting on the base of an ancient one erected by a Saxon bishop, while scattered around its fringe are roomier houses of sombre aspect, owing to the dark whin stone of which they are mostly fashioned. Some two or three score of summer visitors, I am told, find quarters here in the holiday season, the romance of being on an island making up to them no doubt for their contracted sphere of activity.

Upon the south side of the village is the old parish church, and covering a great deal of ground are the imposing and still ample remains of the great Norman fabric raised in the beginning of the twelfth century. Of the monastery, the foundations and some of the lower arches and walls are extant, and define with sufficient clearness the nature of the different buildings, while the high wall enclosing the establishment is virtually perfect. This, however, is a good deal due to careful excavations, some twenty years ago, by General Crossman of Cheswick, the owner of the island, though the priory and precincts actually belong to the Crown. An ancient Scotsman—at least, he confided to

me later that he was born north of the Tweed—rose, so to speak, out of the tombs in due course to confront us, with almost the flavour of the preface of a Waverley novel. The speech of a lowland Scot would certainly not betray him in north-east Northumberland to any but a reasonably wide-open local ear, and the eloquence of this old gentleman was only equalled by his zeal and knowledge.

I am not going to describe in lengthy detail the ruins of this once, nay, even in its decay, still, stately pile. Concerning the nave, some one hundred feet long, a good deal of its north wall remains, with two bays of the north aisle arcade sufficient to show the beautiful moulded Norman arches, and the massive piers which were its distinguished feature. Part of both transepts, for the building was cruciform, are yet standing, nearly roof-high, and one of the diagonal arches which support the central tower still spreads its long slender-moulded shape against the sky. Enough of the east wall of the chancel remains to show the whole east window, which has, however, lost its tracery, and this portion, which replaced in early English style an original Norman apse, represents I believe, the only innovation on the work of the Norman builders. Of the west end, which originally carried two towers, one yet in part remaining, practically the entire elevation is complete. It is entered by a profusely moulded round-headed doorway, flanked by Norman arcading, partially crumbled on either side, while both storeys above are pierced by large round-headed windows. The local sandstone, of which most of the church is built, though unduly crumbled, gives the warm tone to the building that matches so becomingly the green drapery with which nature decorates, sometimes with too lavish hand, these enduring monuments of ancient piety and mediæval art.

Lindisfarne is the work of Benedictines, who had Durham in their mind, as is obvious, I believe, to any one familiar with that splendid fane. The monastery was a large and important one, as became a spot that had been the centre

of a bishopric extending from the Forth to the Tees for several centuries. But the ancient church founded, as we already know, by St. Aidan at the dawn of Northumbrian Christianity, with its one or, possibly, two successors, was destroyed and its Saxon monastery with it by the Danes in 875, and the spot lay waste till the much more splendid foundations of those we now see were laid by the Benedictines two centuries later. The fact that the old material of Lindisfarne Cathedral was used in the Norman priory church sufficiently justified, perhaps, the poetic licence of Scott, who in "Marmion" deals so largely with this corner of Northumberland; and the dreadful doom of Constance of Beverley within these very walls will, I trust, be among the reader's abiding memories.

"In Saxon strength that Abbey frown'd  
With massive arches broad and round,  
That rose alternate, row and row ;  
On ponderous columns short and low.

. . . . .  
On the deep walls the heathen Dane  
Had pour'd his impious rage in vain ;  
And needful was such strength to these,  
Exposed to the tempestuous seas,  
Scourged by the winds' eternal sway,  
Open to rovers fierce as they."

The desertion of Lindisfarne before the ravaging Danes took place in the time of its sixteenth bishop, when the brethren carried with them to Durham not only the bones of St. Cuthbert, but those of St. Aidan, and all the fragments they could collect of other bishops, together with the head of the saintly King Oswald, their lay founder. How St. Cuthbert's bones were brought back here in William the Conqueror's time was related in the last chapter. That they were carried again to Durham as soon as prudence allowed may be noted here. No great additions or alterations were ever made in the fabric, which gives it peculiar value as a monument of Norman or Romanesque art. Its situation on this lone and windy isle adds a distinction that

will surely move the visitor, whether skilled or otherwise in architectural values.

Now, a village church is unfairly handicapped when thrust under the shadow of a great abbey—even a ruined one. With its hoary, weather-beaten, unalloyed Early English character and quaint belfry this one would beckon to the wanderer from afar off, almost anywhere else in Northumberland, and an expedition after the key would be held as nothing. For this church, of all churches in the kingdom, where are neither vagabonds, tramps, nor ruffians, and whence come a small but steady stream of respectable and presumably intelligent pilgrims, is kept securely locked, with the key lurking somewhere in the village. This, too, when a relentless tide is waiting to swallow you up, and time that like the other waits for no man somewhat pressing. I have hunted church keys, I dare say, as much as any one, I have tracked them from house to house, and even followed them into the hay and harvest field. I have run them unavailably to ground before the barred doors of ancients who are charring in a neighbouring village, or selling eggs at a distant market. I know entire counties where practically every church is held as a fortress. I also know adjoining counties of identically the same social quality where practically every church is open without in anywise suffering thereby, and have wandered all over them both with feelings towards their respective custodians of a most opposite description. If Wiltshire, for instance, leaves nearly all its church keys hospitably in the doors, why should those of Hereford be all in the grip of job gardeners or wandering washerwomen, both counties being populated by a respectable peasantry, with like virtues and vices? These last do not assuredly include the desecration and plundering of their churches, while that potential criminal, the tramp, cruises about either in equal force. Such precautions at Holy Island struck one as almost inhuman with that dove-cot-like refuge swinging in one's mind's eye between sand and sea, and the caution as to punctuality of our jarvey in our ears—above all a jarvey who had spoken so lightly of

breasting the in-flowing tide with his labouring horse and our precious weights.

For there had been other things to do and see besides the priory : the castle, for instance, a mile away, near the outer southern point of the island, whose walls were raised on a fine isolated cone of whinstone rock known as the Beblowe, and over a hundred feet high, in the time of Henry the Eighth for defence against the Scots and French. It has, therefore, no feudal significance, but in boldness and symmetry, as a rock fortress towering above the green meads and sandy shores and commanding a vast prospect of the English and Scottish coast, presents a most ideal picture. From hence you may not only look back to Bamburgh and out to the Farne and inland to the distant Cheviots, but you can mark the mouth of the Tweed and be-walled Berwick, still almost martial in its pose, and away to the north the eastern Lammermuirs dipping abruptly to the sea in the grand headland of St. Abbs and the grim lonely perch of the *Master of Ravenswood* and *Caleb Balderstone*. The castle was used as a coast-guard and artillery station till recently, and now, like its neighbour of Bamburgh in miniature, has been adapted to the residential needs of a recent purchaser. It is from distant points on sea or mainland, however, that one sees it to most advantage, where the boldness of its outline shooting up from the flat horizon suggests greater bulk and importance than is discovered on a close acquaintance, well worth making though that be. The base of the walls are flush, or nearly so, with the lofty rock foundations, and a steep path leads up to a characteristic-looking entrance, an object altogether out of the common—a page plucked from some Christmas picture-book, telling of brave knights and fair captive maidens waving handkerchiefs at them out of barred windows. There is no particular story, however, to this lone fortress, so remote from those domestic wars that were beginning to sober down even when it was built, just after Flodden, for a mere outpost held by a small garrison for the King or his lieutenant. Indeed, Lindisfarne itself suffered very little throughout the

Border feuds that ravaged everything in sight of it. One may fancy that the sacking of monasteries, of which the Scots did their share, was often the afterthought of a raid, when the men were excited by liquor and the lust of blood and plunder. Lindisfarne was altogether holy ground, and there was almost nothing to raid except the priory and its property, and the act would have necessitated a special expedition in cold blood and very wet feet for that particular purpose.

A somewhat farcical part in the hapless tragedy of the 'fifteen was played by the little castle. For one Lancelot Errington, the master of a ship, a bold resourceful person and an enthusiastic Jacobite, captured it by stratagem and assault. Having invited twelve out of the fifteen soldiers who comprised the garrison to a feast on board his ship, he made them drunk, and thereupon proceeded himself with his nephew to the castle, admittance being naturally granted them. The pair, pistol in hand, then turned out the three remaining occupants, shut themselves in and hoisted the white flag of the Pretender on the tower. This was espied in due course by the loyal folks on Berwick ramparts to their amazement, and no time was lost in despatching a detachment to investigate the mystery. The redoubtable Lancelot, however, and his nephew refused all terms of capitulation, till, after some interchange of shots with the soldiers, they made their escape from the castle, hoping to hide in the rocks till night should favour a passage to the mainland. But a rising tide drove them from their lair and they were captured, Errington being wounded. After this they were taken to Berwick and, amid the mixed greetings of the populace, conducted to the old Tolbooth. From this, however, when his wound had healed and with some outside connivance, Errington and his nephew burrowed themselves out, crossed the Tweed in a boat, and fled to Bamburgh. Here they were secreted in a pea-stack for nine days by a friend in the castle, and with £500 on the older man's head, they ultimately reached Newcastle and got away to France.





HOLY ISLAND



After the general pardon, Errington returned, kept an inn for thirty years in Newcastle, and died of grief, it is said, on hearing of Culloden—though a publican's ailments are not always above suspicion—an honest and uncompromising Jacobite to the last.

Another sturdy Englishman, a century before Errington, adventured, though not in his case wilfully, on Holy Island. A much more famous person this than the other, though neither local histories, guide-books, nor antiquaries know anything about it; nor would their writers, I am afraid, be always clear who Captain John Smith, the slayer of Turks and the Founder of Virginia, was. But the strenuous Elizabethan and Lincolnshire yeoman's son tells us himself how he was wrecked on this sacred but rocky spot. As a young adventurer in a brief campaign in Flanders, he had just whetted that maiden sword which was to perform such astounding feats subsequently in Transylvania, and he was taking the first of those many sea voyages, rife with shipwreck, battle and exploration, that he afterwards accomplished. But here John Smith was a mere peaceful passenger, bound, not on privateering, but on quite matter-of-fact business, for Edinburgh. For it fell out that a year before a too canny Scot had crossed his path while still a callow youth, making his first visit to Paris, with no experience and only a moderate purse. Of this last his friend made so free that the future hero soon found himself penniless, and was compelled to take service with a troop of horse. There had been, however, some exchange of favours, for the pawky Scot had furnished Smith, then an ambitious, friendless youth, with letters of introduction to persons in Edinburgh. It was with these belated instruments in his pocket, and with somewhat ingenuous confidence in them, that he was sailing for Scotland when his ship was cast away on Holy Island. Here he was so badly used by the waves that he lay sick for some time, either in the castle or the village, and was kindly nursed, proceeding, when cured, to Edinburgh, where his introductions proved genuine and procured him much jovial

hospitality, but no step on the ladder of preferment for which he was looking. For ourselves, we ploughed our slow way homewards across the sands without adventure, and reached the mainland as the first ripples of the advancing tide were creeping under our chariot wheels, and the sun was dipping towards the distant Cheviots.





BERWICK-ON-TWEED

## CHAPTER VI

### BERWICK-ON-TWEED

**O**UT of the chaos of former days sprang strange territorial divisions, and they lingered long in Northumberland. Till about sixty years ago the whole seven miles from Beal to Berwick bounds lay within that ecclesiastical district of Lindisfarne, which formed a part, even in a civil sense, of the county of Durham. At Berwick bounds again the traveller entered a little county or kingdom, whose dignity has always demanded special mention in all edicts and proclamations relating to the Realm, and must have given in its day no end of trouble to heralds, draughtsmen, and printers. But this other, this isolated fragment of "Islandshire," known sometimes as North Durham, and with that of Bamburgh and Norham composing the "Three shires," famous in Border story, is a somewhat uplifted and windy but fertile country.

By the sandy wastes of its seashore, the Goswick Golf Club have the best course in Northumberland. But for the most part the district is a triumph of agriculture, deforested, militant, and unadorned, as if the close neighbourhood of Scotland had stimulated the rivalry of its occupants to supreme efforts at banishing the superfluous in rural landscape, and combing and smoothing its face for the serious business of life. There is something, after all, lordly and magnificent in the northern way of doing these things. There is nothing of the petty, miscellaneous culture here, as in the unfenced flats of Bedfordshire or the levels of Belgium, no ill-assorted collection of animals, no patchwork of desultory cultivation, no groups of toilers, dressed as if they had been

fetched for a week out of the slum of a big city, no ragtag and bobtail. High farming may or may not be nowadays profitable, but it follows here, about Berwick and lower Tweed side, the traditions of a great epoch when it was. The ploughs that one behind the other cut their deep brown furrows up the clean thirty-acre stubbles are not drawn by four cheap horses, with a boy to lead them, and a leisurely veteran between the stilts, but a pair of sturdy-looking, briskly-moving Clydesdales, and the man behind earns all told about three and twenty shillings a week. The women pulling turnips in the next field, or mustering thickly where the lifting ploughs are throwing up the potatoes, have a fine alert professional air, and, as already noted, a costume that is the only picturesque thing left among the English peasantry. It is a significant rebuke to the cheap and tawdry finery, the ill-assorted, tasteless shoddy, in which the southern peasant wraps up her self-respect, that the women of the best paid, the best fed, and perhaps the best educated peasantry in Britain, should remain thus wholesome in taste as well as body. It is in keeping, too, that their sphere of work should be on the most ornate and productive farming lands in the country, for East Lothian also still retains them. The maid or matron of the Eastern March, on neither side of the Tweed, wears any sense of indignity on her cheery full-moon face, as she walks down the village street in the working garb of her order. The short linsey woolsey skirt, the thick knitted stockings and heavy boots; the dark blue shirt, the ample bright pink neckerchief bound over the chin, and brown straw hat, are articles of too general work-a-day wear for any kind of school-board manufactured shame. What would the anæmic product of the southern village, once no doubt a rosy child, who stands the clock round at shop counter or restaurant,—what would she give for such complexions as have these northern bondagers and “workers,” for the bounding health they indicate, nay, even for so many holidays, for they work by the day, not by the week, and are not usually wholly dependent on their own exertions?

Indeed, the maidens among them might almost be envied by their leg-weary, ill-nourished sisters, those frequent opportunities for flirtation that lighten their wholesome toil, boisterous chaff, no doubt in sound Border Doric. Perhaps the southern women could not stand up to this man's work. A medical acquaintance of mine from these parts, with a large rural practice in the south, and who ought to know, says that they certainly could not. Baker's bread of American flour, washed down by tea, is a poor mainstay of diet, and another matter altogether from home-made bread and porridge and milk. Unfortunately, the village baker, with his insidious white flour, has already begun to sap the north. The porridge bowl and the cow are ceasing to be the staple of its diet, with whatever accessories good wages may add to it. The low earnings of former generations, which lowered the physique of the southern husbandman, left the vitality of the northern hind unimpaired. For porridge and milk alone will breed and maintain a hardy race, not Canadian Quaker oats eaten out of a soup-plate or saucer, and sprinkled with sugar, as the polite southerner consumes it at breakfast, but porridge of Scotch oatmeal made in a big pot, with all the virtues incident to such wholesale preparation, and partaken of in portions to match. I remember the ceremony at a great Lothian farm in harvest-time, when some fifty hands, including Irishmen and Highland girls, all got their portion twice a day, and can yet see the portly groom to whom, as the only noncombatant on the place, this important duty was assigned, stirring it up in a big outdoor stone boiler, where on normal occasions in winter the cow food was mixed. His implement, if memory serves me rightly, was a wooden spade, and the perspiration rained from his shining face as he ladelled out the savoury mess into the wooden "bickers" of the attendant crowd.

Old customs, however, in a county with such industrial openings as Northumberland, are inevitably giving way. There are nothing like so many bondagers as of old, nor, indeed, are so many needed; nor yet, by the way, is it



altogether the low price of grain \* that caused so much land to be laid away, but the scarcity of labour at a former period, a condition which, I believe, has been somewhat eased of late. This is not surprising, as we may fairly credit the British labourer with a normal amount of sense. Putting aside head men and shepherds, who get a trifle more, the present wages of a hind are from seventeen shillings to twenty-one shillings a week, with a house and garden rent free, coals led, and a thousand yards of potatoes, planted and cultivated by his employer, but which he lifts himself, being given a holiday for the purpose. The bondager is a curious survival. At one time the hind was by agreement bound to find a woman worker to be employed by the day whenever called upon, and the woman's name was not even mentioned in the bond. To-day this obligation is, of course, waived; but a man who brings one such worker (always a relation) even now gets a good place more easily. The woman—wife, daughter, or sister—gets two shillings, sometimes a little less, per day, and double wages for twenty-one days in harvest. The pair will therefore make thirty shillings a week at any rate, together with a free house and garden, and about six pounds' worth of potatoes. A cow used to be owned by almost every family, and kept by the farmer at the rate of three to five shillings a week, but this admirable custom has now practically fallen out of use. Further privileges hardly worth enumerating are conceded by the larger farmers, but enough perhaps has been said to show that the Northumbrian labourer has nothing to complain of, and in his present situation would compare favourably with the most optimistic estimates of the urban enthusiasts, fired with visions of three or even thirty acres and a cow. Some of the bondagers are detached, and work upon their own account, usually sisters, and are given their houses free, and pass locally under the name of "cotters," corresponding in some sort to the "bothy" system that formerly prevailed in more miscellaneous fashion in the Lothians and now abandoned. These particulars relate more especially to

\* Greatly advanced since this was written.

the Alnwick district. To the southward, in the direction of the collieries, wages are even higher, and women are scarcer. Toward the Tweed, on the other hand, the latter are more in evidence, while in Berwickshire, with which we have nothing to do here, they struck me as more numerous still, from the fact, no doubt, that there is more tillage, particularly potatoes, which require abundant labour.

But, alas! there is another side to the picture. The present generation of hinds and bondagers are the last of a porridge-and-milk bred race, and they themselves are falling utterly away from the good habits of their forbears. Neither in Northumberland nor Berwickshire is porridge any longer an article of common use, one of the reasons given being that it takes too long to prepare; and another, that the labourer no longer keeps a cow, a matter entirely for his own choice. The effect of this upon the young children in some localities, I hear on all sides, is lamentable. One of the best authorities in the country told me that for lack of milk and wholesome nourishment generally—not, of course, for lack of means—many of the children might by their appearance have been bred up in the slums of a big city. With the oatmeal, too, is rapidly disappearing the home-baked loaf of wholesome flour to which the north clung longer than the south. The baker's cart, with its loaves of innutritious white flour, is everywhere in evidence. Ask any big farmer, Scottish or Northumbrian on the Eastern March, what is now the staple diet of the women and children of his well-paid dependants, and he will rap out at once, "Baker's bread, stewed tea, and bought jam." The bondager, however, still has the physique at least of a sturdier breeding and parentage, though even she is given to chewing raw rice, lest her complexion should outblaze the radiancy of her smart Sunday clothes.

I do not know why I should have paused here on the long slopes that roll towards Tweedmouth and Berwick from the point of the Kyles hills, and given way to such wholly utilitarian gossip. Perhaps the contrast between these smooth-shaven, prolific, and rectangular undulations, and the savage

desert that must in bygone days have surrounded this same Berwick, a very cockpit of ancient strife, invited such philandering. Ruthlessly, at any rate, have the instruments, human and otherwise, of the enterprising agriculturist swept away every trace of the past on plain and hillside. For some one was nearly always outside Berwick, either on this side or on the other, with a considerable army, since a small one would have been useless. Ancient stone houses, pele towers, venerable oaks that were associated with the signing of treaties, the hanging of traitors, the penning of ultimatums, the pomp of pageants from Rufus to Cromwell, are all gone. The fortified tower of the church at Ancroft, for the protection of the parson and his flock, is the only relic surviving of those sanguinary times.

Two large suburbs of Berwick lie on the south side of the Tweed, Tweedmouth and Spittal. The latter—sprung, as its name implies, from an ancient hospital—might resent the description, for it lies well round the mouth of the river and faces the open sea. Once the haunt of nautical desperadoes, it is now a modest watering-place, on whose tempting sands Berwick bathers and some others disport themselves. Sheltered by heights at the west and south, and baring its breast to the wide, open north and east, its strenuous atmosphere is written all over it. Tweedmouth has a pleasant sound, but clustering thick along the south bank of Tweed it has an unpleasant aspect, modern, raw, and quite unlovely, with a population of nearly four thousand souls. It is an irritant to a road traveller who would fain approach its venerable *vis-à-vis* in a proper frame of mind, but has to thread its inharmonious thoroughfares on his way down to the historic bridge. It has some negative value, I believe, even in an artistic sense, as a safety-valve for such moderate industrial enterprise as may occasionally break out among the Berwickians. Still one should not speak disrespectfully of a town, even though it strikes a mean and sordid note in an otherwise inspiring scene, if it covers the spot where kings have often camped in baffled rage or bloodthirsty confidence,

and where even parliaments have sat. As a matter of fact, the railway traveller of the two has much the most stimulating introduction to Berwick as his train crawls slowly over the long, lofty viaduct, and beholds in front of and beneath him the noble river spanned by its ancient bridge of fifteen arches, with the compact, wall-girt, red-roofed town rising to the low skyline on the further shore. If you steam into Northumberland above one of the most imposing spectacles of modern industry, you roll out of it—for Berwick still likes to think itself a separate entity—over perhaps the most inspiring one of its kind in all England, and the very antithesis of the other. Even on Westminster bridge, how difficult it is, in such a hurly-burly and amid such a hopeless transformation, to feel other thrills than those concerned with the glories of Imperial Britain, so eloquently typified by the flag on the House of Parliament! The savage in one demands blood, some evidences or echoes of what, after all, was for centuries the business of life, the standard of worth and honour, in the scene of our dreams. I admit, unblushingly, that I like a town or castle which has had to fight continually for its life, and to sleep by its arms, and prefer the mouldering shells of Norham or Kidwelly to all the pageant glories of a Warwick or Kenilworth. In a Border country you must be thus constituted, or you won't get more out of it than you would, let us say, out of Norway or the Adirondacks.

In early life, with little more than a Waverley novel, and a "Tales of the Grandfather" equipment with which to encounter the *genius loci*, this leisurely progress over Berwick viaduct was always to me a brief moment of supreme mental exaltation ; not, however, upon any consideration to be admitted. With the wisdom of the years, and no shame in them, such emotions ought surely to be redoubled. On the contrary, as most of us know, they are grey things compared to those which stirred the pulse of youth when the outer edges of its small world were still full of mystery. But, such as they are, Berwick still goes out to meet them, and in its present aspect does no great violence to its past, while the

same clean buoyant waters sweep under its walls and onward to the just visible surf of the unchanging sea. The castle, which only sixty years ago must have stood up so proudly on its western edge, was demolished for a railway-station by a generation who would almost have blown up Westminster Abbey if it had stood in the way of a terminus. But this town of nine thousand souls still rises picturesquely from the water-side to the skyline, which again slopes out and downward to the river mouth, guarded by pier, lighthouse, and breakwater. Berwick, at any rate, stands precisely where it always stood, within the compass, that is to say, of the ancient walls, and covers the same ground and no more worth mentioning than it covered in the time of the Plantagenets to whose primitive customs revenue it contributed no less than one-fourth of the total receipts. For that was the only period of Berwick's commercial prominence, not having yet been reduced to the single and unprofitable trade of war, which to us unwarlike moderns seems somehow to make for its greater glory. The picture, as a whole, still remains tolerably complete for us. It does not suggest a page out of Froissart, like Conway, to be sure, nor yet a half-timbered Tudor seaport like Rye. It is essentially of the north, hard, strong, and stony; age and youth alike disguised, after the local fashion, under a somewhat uncompromising exterior not perhaps, altogether out of keeping with the spirit of the North Sea. But this grimness, after all, is greatly modified by the praiseworthy partiality of the Border people for red tiles. The town slopes to the south as well as to the east, and as the sun shines all over its bright roofs through a pure, crisp and smokeless air, you feel that there is still much to be thankful for in the outward aspect of Berwick, placed as it is on the very highway between two peoples long united in a partnership for filling the earth and air with disfiguring objects and noisome fumes and discordant sounds, and in a mode of life wholly conducive to the uprooting of ancient monuments.

The High Street of Berwick climbs steadily up through

the centre of the town from the seaward end, like that of Alnwick, beneath an ancient gateway to where the railway-station has usurped the site of its once conspicuous castle ; the down platform, I believe, occupying the very floor of the banqueting hall, where such a store of kings, and sometimes men greater even than their kings, feasted, no doubt, as vigorously as they fought. Near the foot of the street, the town hall, market house, and prison, under a single roof, rears above its pseudo classic eighteenth-century portico one of those characteristic belfrys of the period to the height of some one hundred and fifty feet, and where the curfew, though most inappropriately housed, is still duly rung. Italian in form, it is of local design, that, namely, of a worthy burgess of George the Second's reign. It is the only very dominant feature in a view of Berwick, and rather suggests one of those hoary masterpieces that, beyond the Atlantic, still remind Philadelphians or Bostonians of their colonial period, and makes them feel sentimental even towards the Georges, in whose classic architecture so much of their early history is embalmed.

But it looks exotic in Berwick, whose modern features are, after all, much redeemed by a general air of austerity. It would be far too much to expect of its aldermen, that they should house themselves in a fashion congenial to such dreams of Hotspur and the Black Douglas as we pilgrims bring with us, still they might at least have spared the castle. But neither the highways nor houses of Berwick need detain us, though some of the byways down by the river are quaint and narrow, and of unmistakable antiquity. Salmon, I need not say, are a leading item in Berwick trade, the greater half of its large annual catch being secured, I believe, immediately beneath the town, between the bridge and the mouth of the river, though the nets go some six miles up to Norham. What more befitting or cleaner or time-honoured industry could grace a historic and bewalled town than a monopoly in so historic a fish as a Tweed salmon ? Otherwise the grazier and the farmer are its main support, for the corn market,

though of nothing like its former importance in the halcyon days I have already been tempted so often to in allusion, is still a flourishing one. The cobbled streets that have again and again run rivers of blood, now echo to the peaceful clatter of the country cart, the farmer's gig, the squire's chariot, and the more insistent note of the ubiquitous motor car; while the note of a bugle from the barracks or the tramp of a company of foot in a side street may bring betime some suggestion of Berwick's ancient industry. It is not so very long since the Scottish and English farmers stood on different sides of the market. To this day the carters, I am told, affect separate haunts from mere ancient habit.

Berwick is of topographical right most obviously in Scotland, but since the reign of Henry the Fourth it has been, together with its small outlying territory, so militantly in England, that I dare say what patriotism its people have to spare, after vindicating the glorious independence of the ancient Kingdom of Berwick-on-Tweed, is expended on emphasizing the fact. Border towns have this habit strongly upon them. But Berwick is quite peculiarly situated, for it is the market and shopping centre of a large slice of one of the fattest of Scottish counties, as well as of north-east Northumberland. Yet Tweed has been a very real and effective boundary, dividing a once homogeneous people, or rather marking effectively the lines of a separate political allegiance with its age of mutual hatred, quite fortuitous in origin, but fruitful of minor differences in habit and custom. Tweed is a big river, only fordable here and there at low water, and till the international boundary leaves its banks some twenty miles to the westward, I believe the cleavage between the peasantry of the two nations is still very marked. Any southerner, again, with an ear and an ordinary acquaintance with northern speech, can note at once the change of dialect as he crosses the Solway from Cumberland into Dumfriesshire. The Northumbrian burr breaks sharply off at the Tweed, though the confusion of tongues—if differences otherwise somewhat subtle may be so styled—prevails I fancy in Berwick

town, whose people to-day are at least as much Scottish as English in extraction. Where race, however, is really in no way concerned, the whole question is rather subtle though not perhaps the less interesting. I do not think a stranger of reasonable alertness in such matters would be very quick to note such difference in speech or intonation between the two banks of the Tweed as he would between those of the Solway, while along the wild frontier through the Cheviots in the land of the raiders, the thing becomes hopelessly involved and the speech differs a little in any case from that of either Norhamshire or the Merse.

But there is nothing here, of course, approaching the cleavage one finds along the Welsh Border, even where the lingual line does not synchronize with the racial frontier, nor is there anything resembling that strangest thing of the kind in all Britain, if not in Europe, that Chinese wall, which parts the Welsh and Teutonic halves of the remote county of Pembroke, that have not had even a tiff for five centuries. The conditions of the Scottish Border are purely normal, and just what one would expect in a hard-headed, practical people. The great fact, however, of their separate histories, and the legacies left by them, stimulate one's curiosity perhaps unduly in the small matter of such contrasts as there may still be between these near neighbours, and the diverging characteristics that artificial separation, old as it is, has implanted within them. There is surely something curious in a once happy family, so far as Saxon and early mediæval communities allowed themselves to be happy, being rent asunder by quite fortuitous circumstances and then hurled at one another's throats for centuries in mortal strife, generation after generation; born and bred to think of each other as devils incarnate, and to fling backwards and forwards in prose and verse every opprobrious epithet known to their rich and common vernacular.

The circuit of Berwick walls is a performance that no one with an opportunity to make it should evade. The town, however, has been twice fortified, the ancient walls of the



mediæval period, frequently demolished and rebuilt, enclosed a larger area, and their fragments and grass-grown foundations are still conspicuous on the upper and Scottish side, some way beyond the yet perfect ramparts of Elizabeth, which blend with them at some points. That these older works had been existing for some time in the beginning of the thirteenth century is certain, as we read of them being repaired and extended to meet the growth of their greatly prospering town. Henry the Second rebuilt the castle after wresting the town from the Scots, who had held it, as the chief port of Scotland, ever since Saxon Northumbria fell in half at the Tweed. The only upstanding survival of the older fortifications, which were two miles in circumference, is a massive pentagonal tower of three stories looking out towards Scotland. Here was swung the alarm bell which warned the citizens of the approaching foe, and here, too, on its summit blazed the beacon fire that first roused the warriors of the north-eastern March. The broad promenade on the summit of the Tudor ramparts lifts one up above the town, on the one hand, and the green fields that slope to the adjacent sea upon the other. One looks down from them on the roofless and grass-grown interior of casements, guard-rooms, storehouses and apartments, some still showing the mouldering fireplaces which warmed the gunners of Elizabeth's rude artillery. The foliage of the densely shaded, wide-spreading graveyard of the parish church rustles picturesquely against the inner side of the ramparts at the top of the town. The ample edifice itself will hardly attract, as it was erected in the Cromwellian period, and in that respect at least has the merit of singularity.

It was a bright July noon when I made my first acquaintance with this suggestive scene. Peace, sunshine, and solitude then pervaded it. The winds for once were still, and the people of Berwick, as it was market day, were doubtless well occupied below, for which fortuitous combination I was thankful. The prospect seaward and to the south was one of summer skies and blue waters, touched here and there with the smoke of a

trading steamer or the sail of a cobble. The mouth of the Tweed and the narrow channel, guarded by the lighthouse pier, up which its thousand salmon run to noble or ignoble ends, or to return again, lay below. Beyond it were the yellow sands of Spittal, with its houses lurking in the shadow of overhanging hills, and in the further distance, yet distinct enough, the pale sandy levels of Holy Island, with its uplifted rock fortress, craning far out into the blue.

The citizens of not many towns have so stimulating a Sunday parade ground as these grassed and gravelled ramparts, discreetly provided, moreover, with an occasional seat as a further aid to reflection; for the visitor disposed that way and with sufficient historical equipment to call up only a small part of that crowded past in which Berwick so prominently figured, will in all likelihood be quite thankful for one of them before he has finished. Some people derive Berwick from the Cymro-Teutonic compound *Aber-wick*. This sounds most reasonable, *aber* signifying the mouth of a river, while some of the Saxons whom Ida gathered into one kingdom certainly then or later had a "wick" or town here. The Celts would naturally have emphasized the penultimate and made it *Aberwick*, which is practically the modern name, though some authorities have it *Bere-wick*, *i.e.* grain town or port. But the hazy Berwick of Saxon or Danes, owners and frequent pillagers respectively, pales in interest before the much more realistic town and stronghold of the Middle Ages. It had fallen in Saxon times under the rule of Lothian and in due course of Scottish kings, and it changed hands thirteen times between that period and the Wars of the Roses. The year 1480 may be recommended to all for whom a date represents a position on some mental table, not a confusion of figures like one's new number at the Army and Navy Stores, as the final inclusion of the town in the Kingdom of England, reserving of course its cherished autonomy with all the dignity of description therein implied. William the Lion, who had been a scourge to Northumberland and was captured in a somewhat celebrated skirmish near Alnwick, had surrendered

Berwick to Henry the Second as a pledge for his good behaviour on release. But the other Lion, Richard the First, whose hurried visits to his kingdom were mainly occupied in turning every available asset into cash for his Oriental adventures, made a handsome sum out of the sale of Berwick and other Border places much more intimately bound to England. But his brother John, though not a heroic absentee but a very patriotic scoundrel, in so far as he had no love for crossing the Channel and poked his nose into almost every corner of his realm to the harassing of the locals, was at least a clever scoundrel and a formidable neighbour to the Scots and Welsh. His northern barons, by way of annoying the truculent monarch, paid homage to Alexander of Scotland in return for his alliance. It was a rash transaction, encouraged perhaps by the fact that John had in a former year made a futile attempt to recover Berwick, and even built a castle at Tweedmouth, which was destroyed by William the Lion. This time, however, John surged down on Scotland with a large army, including a host of mercenaries, and was more successful.

John's soldiers, with small expectation perhaps of their wages, executed most barbarous cruelties on the inhabitants in the process of extracting the secret or supposed secret of their treasures. One might give even John the benefit of the doubt whether these grievous things were done with his approval. But when the army returned to Berwick, the king not only ordered the town to be fired but set fire himself to the roof which had sheltered him, and the flames are said to have been fed with living bodies of the populace.

Revenge sated, however, John retired, and nothing was said about the possession of Berwick. Probably there was not much left to possess. The capital of south-eastern Scotland inhabited, according to contemporary writers, by opulent merchants living in palaces and owning many ships, was now a smouldering site, with the gutted castle rising grimly alongside of the desolation.

Berwick rose again, however, like a Phoenix from its ashes; a colony of Flemings were invited over by Alexander

the Third, and their presence is still recalled by Woolmarket Street. When Edward the First arrived, seventy years later, on his memorable Scottish campaigns, Berwick was more prosperous than ever ; " a second Alexandria," says an enthusiastic contemporary ; whole fleets of ships laden with carded wool cleared from the narrow mouth of Tweed and brought back varied cargoes from the continent. A famous church, dedicated to St. Laurence, of which the very site is now mere conjecture, sheltered the dust of Scottish kings and princes and witnessed the marriage splendours of more than one royal bride, while a new bridge had been built in place of an earlier one carried away by the abnormal floods of 1199. The fortifications, however, except those of the castle, seem to have been neglected in this period of prosperity under Alexander the Third, a lull, so far as Berwick was concerned, before the great storm of the Anglo-Scottish thirty years' war was to break upon it. Domestic turbulence had hitherto been always chronic upon both sides of the Border ; Scots and English had waged war against each other, both under their kings and, locally, under their chiefs, but it is generally agreed that the hatred and rivalry of later days were not yet. Great barons held property in both countries ; the royal houses had frequently intermarried ; even the Border line was vague. The Highlands were a barbarous back country owning a mere nominal allegiance to the Scottish Crown, and still a quite unknown quantity in politics. The Scotland of those times was mainly, of course, the south and east, whose people, for the most part, and in all essentials that matter, were one people with the northern English. Several Scottish monarchs had willingly, or under pressure, done homage to Saxon and Angevin kings. It was a somewhat shadowy tie, and a quite usual proceeding between adjoining states of unequal size. The touchiest princes in Wales had seen no indignity in it, nor ever raised the warcry on that account alone. The Scottish kings had so often held fiefs in England, that on their rendering homage it might be open to after question whether it had been rendered for these or for their kingdom,

and interpreted retrospectively according to the inclination of the disputant.

Edward the First, however, had no mixed views on the subject. When the young Queen of Scots died in 1290, in whose hoped-for marriage with Edward of Carnarvon the English king looked forward to a union of the crowns, there were many candidates in the field. It was not unnatural that Edward should be appointed, or appoint himself, arbitrator, a duty he performed with great care and ceremony at Norham and Berwick. Still less so that his accepted nominee, John Balliol, should agree to formally recognize him as his suzerain. Indeed, all the claimants did this at Norham before the selection was made, and very naturally. Edward had recently completed the conquest of Wales, and his mind was bent on securing the union of the three countries. In due course the Scots themselves provided the opportunity, for when the English king was occupied in a tedious war with France, they opened negotiations for an alliance with that country, a proceeding to be often repeated in the next three centuries, to the greater embittering of Anglo-Scottish relations, and to the further drifting apart of the countries through the influence of French customs, but at this time a new departure, and, I fancy, without precedent. Hitherto the relationship between the Crowns had been generally friendly; their quarrels, neither very frequent nor very bitter. Scotland, her chief ingredient being men of English race, had naturally followed in the wake of English civilization. Edward, both as a soldier and as a far-seeing statesman, had no choice, and made instant demand on the Scots for securities so long as his war with France lasted; Balliol himself, always in a false position, had become a negligible quantity in the council chamber. In short, the Scots refused point blank the castles that Edward asked for, as was natural enough, seeing the drift of their intentions, which were promptly illustrated in the burning of English ships at Berwick and the seizure by surprise of the great strongly garrisoned castle of Wark-on-Tweed. Such trifles as these, amid long centuries

filled with them, would be quite unworthy of notice here if it were not that they incidentally marked the close of the old and sufficiently friendly relations between the two kindred people and the beginning of three centuries of strife, hatred, and alienation. They also mark the beginning of those devastating campaigns of the great Edward, which made him master of the whole of Scotland from Tweed to Caithness. Wallace was captured and executed, Bruce and his then small following virtually crushed. The country, divided for the time in allegiance, was already reconstituted for union with England and Wales when Edward died in the very consummation of the act. Few crises in British history seem so pregnant of incalculable results as this one, closed as it was by the sudden snapping of a single life, though a life in this case, to be sure full of years. The humble loiterer on Berwick walls needs no apology for amusing himself with futile dreams as to what might have been had Edward lived a few more years, for great historians admit the postulate to be fair, and the speculation a worthy one. Wales was an ancient nation, homogeneous in every particular, save for the domestic discord then prevalent among most communities of spirit, but doomed politically by numerical weakness and geography. What we call Scotland was then a group of loosely attached provinces of mixed races, the English predominant, generally misgoverned, in some parts hardly governed at all. It was certainly not the Scotland we are apt to think of that waxed gradually patriotic in the more modern sense, and comparatively united after Bannockburn. If Edward had lived for a little, or even left a son not hopelessly foolish and utterly unmartial, she might have come into the union. Edward, ferocious as he was in strife, did not mean to bully the Scottish barons, most of them of his own sort, after the job was done, as he or his underlings bullied the, to them, quite unintelligible outlanders of little North Wales. He wished only to put them on a level with those of Northumberland, and to stop the constant bloodshed, and these treaties with continental nations. The Scotsman who has

had no leisure to read history—for I dare not suggest that any other sort of Scotsman is thus unfurnished—will crack his heels and damn my impudence for this sort of talk. But as I have said, even the most exalted sages have indulged in these alluring speculations, for how could it be otherwise? and a summer morning on Berwick ramparts seems an irresistible stimulant to these harmless indulgences. The intelligent Scotsman, using the term in an academic and unpractical sense, will say that it is very true, that this might have been and might have lasted. Three centuries of bloodshed and dreadful suffering might have been spared to both countries. Scotland might have kept pace in wealth and prosperity with England, instead of remaining a very poor country, and in material respects a very backward one, till the eighteenth century, to say nothing of the demoralization of Northumberland. In Continental affairs, moreover, the two nations combined would have been proportionately more regarded, though as things turned out, this may not have proved an unmixed blessing, since we might have been tempted to unfortunate foreign adventures. But, says the Scotsman, how about the national pride and character that were developed by our isolated and perilous situation, not to mention the satisfactory method in which the union was ultimately effected? This is unanswerable, but does not lessen the interest at any rate, or answer the question of the Edwardian dream. As regards this little pilgrimage of ours, we are wholly with the Scotsman and against the Edwardian scheme, for half its pleasure would have vanished. There would be no pele towers and no castles, nor any Douglasses, nor Percies, nor Bruces, not such at least as fascinate the ages, nor any moss troopers and raiders; no Kerrs and Fenwicks, no Grahams and Armstrongs, nor even any ballads, but those of love-sick swains and most free-mannered young women; no Kinmont Willies, nor Jocks o' the Syde, nor Parcy Reeds, nor Chevy Chases, nor any of those things that have thrown such peculiar glamour over this northern borderland.

Edward, however, was quite determined to create a Britain that should provide no such romantic material as this, when, in the spring 1295, he turned up at Berwick with thirty thousand foot, four thousand heavy armed horse, and a fleet. The defences must have been deplorably neglected by the money-making burghers, for while the ships annoyed the garrison from the river, the English cavalry leaped their horses over the low walls on the upper side, and the town was won. If statesman-like in his aims, the great king was ruthless in his means of attaining them. Seven thousand of the garrison and the inhabitants are said to have been slaughtered before Edward, seeing a woman dead with her child at her side, at last called a halt. Thirty Flemish merchants defended themselves all day in a tower, called the Red Hall, in the wool market, till they were burned alive inside it. "The mill wheels of the town," said an old chronicler with a pretty imagination, "could have been turned with the rivers of blood." The castle soon surrendered, but the blood madness was over, and its large garrison spared. Fresh walls to the town were then commenced, Edward, it is said, handling a spade himself, after which he executed his victorious march through Scotland. Berwick became, in the following year, the scene of a Parliament, where the Scottish estates swore fealty to the king, who then returned south, leaving Warren as Guardian of Scotland. How Wallace arose and discomfited Edward's lieutenants does not concern us, except that Berwick became Scottish again for a time, till Edward returned to crush, at Falkirk, this new leader, whose right arm was fixed on a spear over Berwick bridge. It was while Wallace occupied the town in his endeavour to capture the castle, that one of its garrison, a Cumbrian, swam all the way to Norham with letters in his hair. Nor is it necessary to allude again in Berwick, which they did not greatly concern, to Edward's later expeditions against Bruce, and his untimely death from his own and England's point of view at Burgh-on-Sands.

Edward the Second, in his futile efforts against Bruce,



dallied here long with his "she wolfe" queen, her teeth not yet showing. Later on he mustered at Berwick the enormous army which marched to the historic disaster of Bannockburn. After this Bruce seized Berwick, and treated it very well, but his people had to sustain one of the fiercest sieges in its history by Edward the Second and an army smarting from its late disaster. It remained, however, to the Scots, and Bruce did a good deal of wall and tower building after the truce of 1323. Soon after this Berwick saw that marriage between the son of Bruce and the daughter of Edward which was to bring about the millennium. The first Edward had destroyed not merely its woolstaplers but its wool trade by transferring it to London, and the much-battered town, though pre-eminent in matters military, never recovered its ancient commercial renown. The truce, however, did not prevent the complete desolating of Northumberland as far as the Tyne by four thousand Scottish knights and men-at-arms, and twenty thousand foot soldiers mounted on hardy ponies, with meal-bag and frying-pan, the customary and formidable type of a Scottish invading host or raiding company. Young Edward the Third pursued them with a force of sixty thousand men, but was ultimately discomfited by the elements, and the Scots escaped.

Both sides being now somewhat out of breath, a solemn treaty of peace was made at Northampton in 1328, all claim to suzerainty over Scotland being formally abandoned. It was no use, however. The first Edward's scheme, if accomplished, might have changed British history, and have inaugurated eventually an era of love. As it was, it left a legacy of unprecedented hate. Quarrels broke out on the Border, and furthermore, as several of the English barons were kept out of their hereditary Scottish estates, guaranteed them by Bruce, they slipped round by sea with a small force, landed in Fife, won a daring fight against odds, and planted Edward Balliol, who was with them, on the throne. All was now again confusion, and Edward marched to Berwick,

leaving his Queen Philippa at Bamburgh, which was unsuccessfully besieged by Archibald Douglas. Berwick, after some suffering, undertook to surrender if not relieved within a certain period, delivering hostages for its good faith. Douglas with a large army was in his rear, and the king, prematurely it is claimed, demanded the city, threatening to hang his hostages, the two young Setons, sons of the deputy governor, if not satisfied. The patriotism of their Spartan parents, it is said, proved stronger than even their affection, or at least than that of Sir Alexander, whose philosophy found consolation in the fact that his lady might bear him other sons, but no such renewal of lost honour was possible. So the poor young men, under their parents' eyes, say the story and the ballad, were launched from the fatal beam. William, the elder, it appears said nothing; but Richard before he jumped remarked that "It was hard to die for nae crime ava, while his feyther and mither were looking on," and heaped, if the tale be accurate, just curses on Edward's head—

"He leaped from off the bitter tree  
And flaughtered in the wynd,  
Twa bonnie flowers to wither thus  
And a' for ae man's mind."

The shriek of the bereaved mother on the walls at the fatal moment was so piercing that it startled the very sea-birds on the shore into sympathetic cries. Douglas, it is said, hung several English merchants in retaliation, and "Seton's sons!" is said to have been a cry for many a day in Scotland when conscience seemed to demand excuse for some sanguinary raid. The place of hanging, a knoll near the southern end of the viaduct, is one of Berwick's sacred spots. Douglas, however, had something else to think of just now, as he crossed the river with his army and fought and lost the famous battle of Halidon Hill, a lofty, bare upland just outside Berwick and conspicuous from all points. Edward outgeneralled and outfought him; the defeat was crushing and the slaughter

tremendous, for English archery had now arrived at its perfection. When Edward had finished with Scotland, particularly as Edward Balliol was subservient to him, it was just about as his grandfather had left it. But Edward the Third was not a great statesman, and the Scots, from "the Reidswire to Orkney," had in the mean time experienced the triumphant reign of Bruce. Their nationality had been cemented and a robust hatred of England aroused that former generations had not known. But we must come down without more ado from Berwick ramparts, or I shall be filling the rest of this book with an indifferent sketch of Anglo-Scottish history. The next two centuries had plenty in store for Berwick, as the storm centre of almost every international struggle and Border broil, and as a rallying-point if not always the headquarters of those important functionaries the Wardens of the March.

I knew, however, what would happen if we sat down on one of those benches, and if the Berwick of perhaps its palmy and most dramatic period has produced congestion here, it cannot be helped. We have now but to follow our rampart walk in its gradual descent to the river, and then turning upstream pursue the course of the water-side walls along the quaint and irregular terraces that are squeezed in between them and the more venerable portion of the lower town, till we come to the bridge. Beyond the latter is the old water-tower of the castle, of which two other fragments of towers escaped the destroying hand of the railway makers. Of the three old gateways, two remain, one of them crossing the main street; but not a trace is left of the several religious foundations which thrived as such places always did where bloody deeds were going forward, and illustrious personages making offerings to the Almighty for their success in them, or compounding for their souls' welfare in good money.

No large steamers nor tugs nor coal barges defile the mouth of Tweed, which is well. A few small steamers, trading sloops, and such like, pass back and forth through the narrow channel of the bar beneath the long curving lighthouse pier, or lie at anchor in the swift tide beneath the walls, and

the sleepy sunny house fronts that blink above them. The white wings of innumerable gulls take the place of the sails of the Flemish fleets that spread their larger canvas to the wind in the days when Berwick paid a fourth of the king's custom, and who shall say what a tribute in blood? With the Bruces and the Edwards in mind as I slowly re-crossed the bridge to the further shore, the lines of a mediæval Welsh poet, written on another ancient blood-stained town, at the mouth of another famous salmon river, kept jangling in my head—

“Its green sea brine thickened the blood of warriors, and the waves of ocean  
swelled its tide,

The red-stained seamew screamed with joy as it floated upon a surge of gore.”

## CHAPTER VII

### NORHAM

SO leaving Berwick none too soon, in spite of its yet untold tale of York and Lancaster heroes, of Queen Margaret and James the Fourth, who was married to her just outside the town at Lamberton, and whose naked body was brought here after Flodden ; of the Protector Somerset, of Cromwell and Charles the First, and of the Jacobite insurrections, we may take the road up the south bank of Tweed, and make our way, with some foreboding interruptions already troubling my conscience, to Norham. It is a long climb from Tweedmouth on to the high plateau of undulating uplands, over which the road drives forward to Coldstream, Kelso, and the west. Northward of Tweed, Berwick bounds extend for two or three miles, and at Lamberton Toll, on the Scottish Border, was a kind of eastern Gretna Green, where runaway couples innumerable were made happy or miserable for life for a crown piece and a gill of whisky. That James the Fourth, however, was not married to the daughter of Henry the Seventh on such economical and indecorous terms, will not need telling. For that ceremony at Lamberton, as well as its preliminaries, was conducted on a gorgeous scale befitting the union of such a noble pair, and of such auspicious omen, though, as it proved, so tragically falsified. But on this south side we are soon out of the little kingdom, and from the uplifted road there are fine views across Tweed and over the Merse towards the Lammermuirs. The river itself, though but a mile or so away, soon hides its ample waters, though the trail of the valley is conspicuous enough with its

curtains of hanging woodland, its park-like green slopes surmounted here and there by some country house of note. Four miles up the river is the first bridge. The main road, however, is in no way concerned with it, but pursues its course directly to Norham on Northumbrian soil. A country lane leads down to it, and in due course lands you on a quite imposing chain bridge swung across the Tweed, where it runs through something of a gorge, and shows altogether to great advantage. I believe this to be one of the earliest bridges of the kind ever contrived. It carries an inscription over the entrance which proclaims it the creation of an enterprising sea captain, with some graceful and pertinent remarks anent the union of England and Scotland. The river sweeps towards it from out a high screen of hanging woodland, and speeds away below into spreading rapids thigh deep, in which a fisherman or two may always be seen casting a trout or salmon fly, while moored to the bank under the bridge are the queer-shaped little cockle boats of the net fishermen.

Now, I have no business, of course, across this bridge, seeing the title of this book. But the angler, at any rate the right kind of angler, will, I know, understand why I not only crossed it, but spent a whole day some miles upon the further side. It was the Whittadder, the most captivating of Tweed's larger tributaries which joins the latter between here and Berwick, that thus beguiled me. The memories of an early intimacy of no mere passing kind with a good deal of that entrancing stream, had filled me with a consuming desire to look upon its amber waters once again. Secondly, the survival of a friend and oft-times companion settled within easy reach of its banks, something more than doubled, perhaps, the urgency of the occasion. I don't know why I should drag my reader across the Union bridge, and over half a dozen miles of pleasant but unnoteworthy Merse country to stand with a couple of middle-aged wights in a deplorably reminiscent and even sentimental mood upon Chernside bridge. But here, at any rate, I found myself with the clear waters from distant Lammermuir playing the old tunes upon their

rocky bed, while into them, with quieter rush, subsided the Blackadder's more gentle streams; the two mingling in a broad throbbing pool to hurry off in company beneath the arches of the bridge, on whose parapets we leaned, towards the Tweed. We were many miles below our ancient haunts, to be sure, but even this old bridge carried one memory, at any rate, for both of us, that of a septuagenarian sportsman, described anon by his contemporaries of that day as "six feet of copper wire," standing erect and slim and fresh amid a pack of exhausted and disappointed otter hounds. Three or four sporting farmers, whose enthusiasm had carried them to this quite embarrassing aloofness from home, country, and friends, and two or three young men who would have died rather than admit fatigue in the presence of that enduring veteran, whose powers were the wonder and admiration of his neighbourhood, which at that time was theirs. This was in the far-away days when not half a dozen men in all Great Britain kept otter hounds. Among them was our old friend here, who harried the otters of East Lothian and Berwickshire with incredible zeal and sufficient skill and moderate success. There were no eleven-o'clock trysts, no hamper luncheons, in those Spartan times, nor any traps or cycles skirmishing on the flanks, nor any ladies in evidence, nor indeed, any following at all, as such things are now understood. Operations then commenced at five or six in the morning, and the sportsman was often, of necessity, two or three hours on the road even before that hour. Just before the period of our acquaintance with this venerable enthusiast he used to keep his hounds in a suburb of Edinburgh, and, when necessary, travel with them in his horse-van through the night, or the small hours, turning up at the meet quite early enough even for the ardent and scanty few who followed him. Report said that he had once worn a white tie, but he certainly never discussed theology, nor did I myself ever hear him mention any subject at all but hounds and otters and mileages, for he was sparing of words, wanting all his breath, no doubt, for more serious purposes. He had a

pleasant free way with him too. The very afternoon, I remember, before the one which landed us on Chernside bridge, we had journeyed by train together from Drem station, in East Lothian, to Grant's House in Berwickshire, and the old gentleman, encountering some hitch about a box or truck for his hounds, had introduced the entire pack without ceremony into the nearest third-class carriage, where in quarters so unaccustomed or so ill suited to their peaceful grouping, and so provocative of friction, we spent an extremely animated hour. Yet with all his unflagging exertions, he was not very lucky during those two years, and the otters had more generally the better of him, and it was, I think, a sore subject. I remember, on one occasion, how he shied at an ingenuous unsophisticated angler from Newcastle, who, from the doorway of a Lammermuir fishing inn, inquired in a breezy fashion of the rather grim old Nimrod, after a blank morning, whether he had "caught many otters." Nothing, indeed, was further from this inoffensive innocent's thoughts than an unseemly taunt, for his mind was obviously a blank upon the subject—a condition quite credible in those times. But it was not credible to this old sportsman, as he made very evident.

But my own thoughts to-day ran on trout, rather than those elusive amphibians, and on those delightful memories of scene and association, human and physical, that glorify the gentle art, particularly this branch of it, in a fashion which the layman, possessed of only a nodding acquaintance with such streams, and none whatever with their inwardness or their nature, cannot surely fathom. I mistrust even the poet by the brookside for the slight terms he is on with it, unless, indeed, he is an angler, and has penetrated its mysteries and its thousand moods, and lived with them. For myself, I have since been on terms with many and many a stream, such as the Whittadder, and on terms of even greater intimacy and equal affection with some of them. But its memory has, nevertheless, abode with me through life, not merely as one of the best, but as one of the most engaging of them all.



The light of youth, no doubt, was then reflected on its restless face, the waters glowed more brightly and the woods were greener. But a mountain stream is always young, always joyous, always suggestive. It never grows old, and only hoarse when in angry mood, and if you have been young with it, brother angler, you know, I am sure, what it must feel like to return fortuitously after the passing of a generation, and hear its changeless voice again.

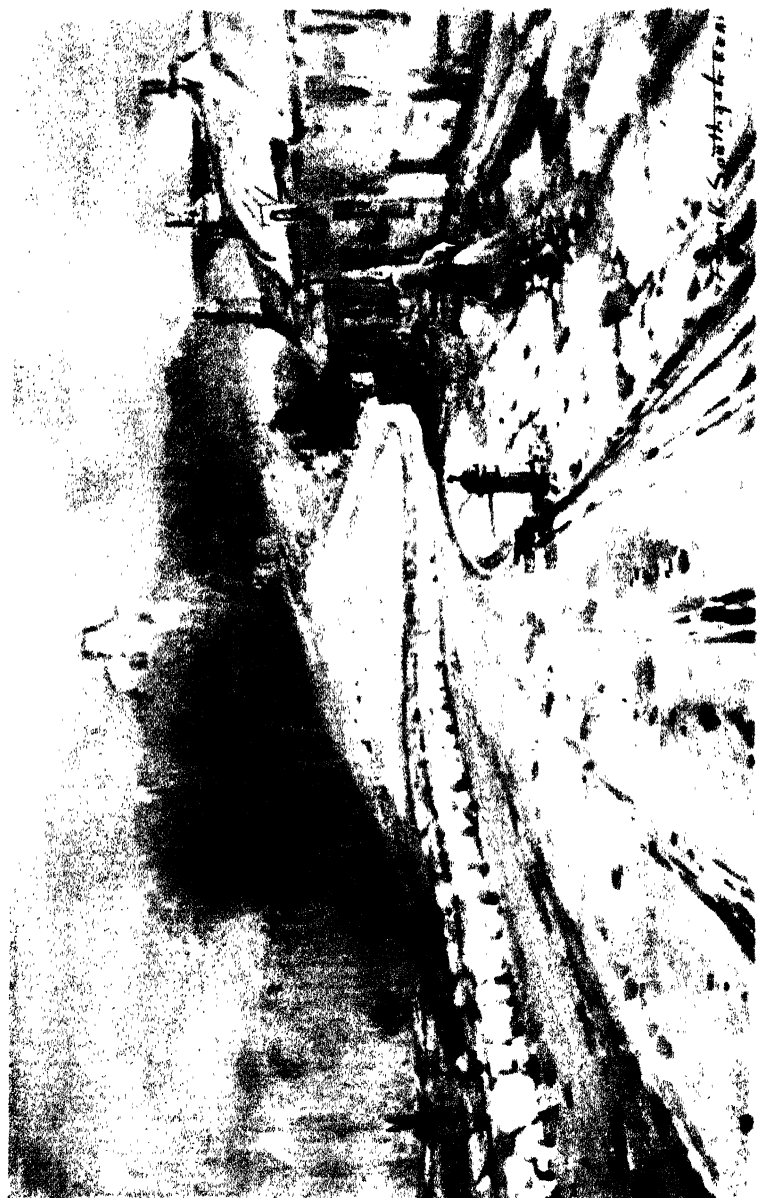
At any rate, the piping of the Whittadder under Chernside bridge carried me again in fancy far up its winding woody vale past Edrom to Abbey St. Bathans, and upward still to the wilder scenes of Ellemford. And thence pursuing with yet more faithful memory each curve and twist for many a further mile of more perfect solitude, by Cranshaws and Priestlaw by sheep runs and grouse moors to where its infant streams trickle out of the moss, back of Lammerlaw. Hence you could look out over the whole heart of ancient Scotland, and, what is more, see just beneath you the woody glen where Lucy Ashton and Edgar Ravenswood plighted their troth, and the village kirk whither the hapless Bride of Lammermuir was carried within so brief a space to her marriage and to her grave.

If Scott the novelist has tempted me to an extra line or two in this already overlong digression, Scott the poet soon meets us in no such parenthetical fashion when Tweed is once more recrossed and our faces again turned westward.

“Day set on Norham’s castled steep,  
And Tweed’s fair river, broad and deep,  
And Cheviot’s mountains lone :  
The battled towers, the donjon keep,  
The loophole grates, where captives weep,  
The flanking walls that round it sweep,  
In yellow lustre shone.  
The warriors on the turrets high,  
Moving athwart the evening sky,  
Seem’d forms of giant height :  
Their armour, as it caught the rays,  
Flash’d back again the western blaze,  
In lines of dazzling light.”

Some readers, I suspect, in our degenerate days will need





NORHAM CASTLE

reminding that these are the opening lines of the first canto of "Marmion." The faithful, I am sure, will spout them, if only under their breath, as they leave the peaceful street of the long, low-built and still subjective-looking village, and ascend the hill to the ruined towers of this greatest of actual frontier fortresses, rising above the woods. And as they top the long slope, and pass through its belt of foliage on to the green sward of the outer bailey, and see confronting them the grim red sandstone keep, the stirring picture of the reception here of Lord Marmion, the king's envoy to James the Fourth, then mustering his forces at Edinburgh for the fatal campaign of Flodden, will surely come back to memory over any length of years. But at Norham even Scott must give way to the stern realities of its crowded past. From the front approach the keep has an air of massive solidity, a huge rectangular pile to outward seeming rising to a height of eighty or ninety feet. The topmost of its four stories has virtually crumbled away, save a single turret-like fragment, which still springs, defiant of time and storm, a conspicuous feature in all distant views of the ruin. Crossing the now dry moat, one passes through an archway beneath the ancient entrance, long bereft of its approaching staircase, into two large basement chambers of vaulted roof and sombre aspect. Emerging into the open at the further side, one realizes that these are the only portions of the fabric, save the actual apertures in the twelve-foot thickness of its walls, where there would be now even shelter from a storm. The whole front elevation, with that of the west, and a portion of the east still flanking it, forms from within a mere shell, though, in truth, a sufficiently imposing one. The massive Norman arches of the doors and windows make effective and scarcely less stern intervals in the grim height of red masonry, while a few remains of tower and tributary buildings yet hold together about its feet. The moat, which ran round the two vulnerable sides, is still deep-sunk and well defined; and at the lower end of the grass paddock, which was once the outer bailey, an arched gateway and a portion of the curtain wall still look down towards the

across the river from the castle, that he declared to the candidates for the Scottish throne and the assembled nobles that he had come to Scotland in the capacity of its supreme lord, and overawed them into submitting to that decision, which he delivered afterwards at Berwick. In the wars of Bruce, during the next reign, Norham, under Sir Thomas Gray, held out successfully against him for eighteen almost continuous months, a weary period enlivened by a most romantic episode, as related by Leland, and one which gives us a glimpse of the exacting demands which chivalry sometimes makes on its professors. For at a great feast of the *elite* of Lincolnshire, a damsel bore a helm crested with gold to Sir William Marmion, with a missive from her mistress, enjoining him to go into the most dangerous place in England, and there let the helm "be seen and known as famous." There was no question at that moment, when Bruce was on the warpath, nor, indeed, at almost any moment for the next two centuries, as to the quarter in which a valiant soul could most readily get himself killed, and Marmion made straight for the Tweed, and got into Norham, where great deeds had been going forward. He had only been there four days when a hundred and sixty cavaliers, the flower of the Scottish March, arrived before the castle, bent, no doubt, on one of those trials of strength that the Borderers indulged in as a kind of pastime, rather than any serious attempt on so strong a fortress. Sir Thomas Gray, who was at dinner, rose at once to accept the challenge, marched his men out of the castle, and behind him followed the doughty Marmion, whom, beholding all clad in resplendent armour, surmounted by the helmet with the golden crest, he thus addressed: "Sir Knight, ye be come hither to fame your helmet; mount up on your horse, and ride like a valiant man to your foes even here at hand, and I forsake God if I rescue not your body dead or alive, or I myself will die for it." This was hard on Marmion, as the Lincolnshire lady could have no intention of sending him single-handed against several companies of horse, seeing that he was not yet her husband

to be got rid of. But Gray's tone, which we can guess at, apparently left him no choice ; so spurring his horse like a gallant man, he rode down on the Scots, who had him on the ground in no time, and were doubtless in the act of selecting a vulnerable spot in his armour, when Gray and his men were among them, and overthrew them utterly. Marmion was pulled out of the scrimmage sorely knocked about, but able to mount again and join in the chase across the Tweed, while the women of the village caught fifty riderless horses, on which the footmen mounted. So there have been two resplendent Marmions at Norham, though, possibly, the Marmion of fact suggested a name for the Marmion of fiction. Norham was the scene of another episode, this time on the night of the coronation of Edward the Third ; for, taking advantage of the inevitable hilarity of the garrison on so auspicious an occasion, a body of Scots attempted a surprise. Sixteen of them were already on the walls when De Maners the Constable, who had been privately warned of their intention, fell upon them, and killed all but one. The omen was considered felicitous to the luck of the young king in his Scottish wars. Thirty years afterwards we find the faithful Sir Thomas Gray still in possession, but at length drawn out into an ambush by the Scots and captured, together with his son, who was a chip of the old block.

In the Wars of the Roses, when scores of sleepy castles in the south that for generations had seen nothing more serious than a tourney had to brace themselves for battle, Norham experienced a little variety in her tale of strife, and found herself formally invested by two kings, a Prince of Wales, and a queen, namely, James the Third, Henry the Sixth, and Margaret, and that interesting infant whose adventure with the Hexham robber has delighted most of us in the same period of life. But they were all, in due course, chased away by Warwick the king-maker, and I have already told how the royal and hapless English trio were compelled to lurk in the woods for some days on an alternative diet of

bread and herring till they contrived to reach Bamburgh. When James the Fourth espoused the cause of Perkin Warbeck, the whole English border was wasted; every tower and fortress that could be captured, dismantled; and excesses of bloodshed committed, that seem to have both astonished and disgusted the more humane pretender himself, who showed the courage of his opinions by withdrawing himself from the siege of Heton. Norham, however, held out, though that redoubtable piece of artillery, "Mons meg," was brought against it, and a monstrous cannon-ball on view, among many others at the custodian's house, is said to have issued from its capacious mouth. Fifteen years later, when the same spirited king crossed the Tweed, on the campaign that ended so fatally for him at Flodden, Norham, together with all the neighbouring castles, at length succumbed after some brief but fierce fighting. A tradition tells that the weak spot of the castle was betrayed by one of its inmates, who sent word to James to plant his guns on the "heugh," just across the river, and batter the north-east corner of the walls. When the place was won, the traitor appeared before the victor to claim his guerdon, which, according to a ballad of Flodden, was a rope.

"Therefore, for this thy traitorous trick,  
Thou shalt be tried in a trice,  
Hangman, therefore, quo' James, be quick,  
The groom shall have no better price."

After Flodden, where we shall find ourselves towards the close of this pilgrimage, one need hardly say that the faithful castle relapsed to its rightful owners, and throughout all the sanguinary doings, both of an international and a mere Border kind, unknown to readers of ordinary history, which distinguished so much of the sixteenth century, played a part, though not any longer a leading one. For Norham had done its work. Few even of Border castles have had so much work to do, and in the time of Elizabeth and James the First as being a crown fortress, it sank gradually into decay—

"Relic of kings, wreck of forgotten wars,  
To the winds abandoned and the prying stars."

The village of Norham, half a mile to the west on the river-level, still maintains, after the austere northern fashion, some appearance of harmony with its ancient associations. Its low one and two storied stone houses, after forming a street for a brief period, spread out like a fan to still face one another at a much more respectful distance across a broad village green, in the centre of which rises a market cross, if not venerable in itself, mounted, at any rate, on steps that are so. Norham was always of importance as commanding one of the chief fords of the Tweed, and bore the name in ancient times of Ubbanford, or Upper ford, changed to North-ham (hence Norham), when it became the limit of the Bishopric of Durham, and the capital of its little temporal domain of Norhamshire. There is altogether a good deal of character in the large and peaceful-looking village, the abode chiefly of salmon fishers and agricultural folk, with a due complement of modest tradesmen, and various other enlightened persons necessary to a country-side. A cheerful-looking hostelry, too, faces one across the broad green, with a strong suggestion, on a nearer acquaintance, of salmon rods and gaffs, of brogues and waders. For while the humble net fisherman (Norham being virtually the head of the netted water) makes his home in the village, a different kind of fisherman altogether will resort here for the purpose, and, no doubt, pay well for the privilege of capturing some of the others' aftermath. The sunny-looking inn of Norham has an air of being saturated with anglers' reminiscences, or what the more brutally frank American calls "fish lies," as well, no doubt, as with the actual triumphs of innumerable heroes. I feel sure that six inches of water down the Tweed, after a dry spell, will galvanize Norham into a frame of quiet exaltation, such as nothing else would, short, of course, of a real spate. It was another and more modest house, however, where I had my bread and cheese, for I confess to fighting shy on such occasions of the midday desolation of an upstairs coffee-room, those gorgeous banquet halls that so resolutely avoid the local atmosphere, unless, perhaps, for the fly-specked portrait



of a deceased Lord-Lieutenant. Members are they of one great family of eminently British apartment that knows no north, nor south, nor east, nor west, where the long table is always spread as if for some impending banquet of early Victorian feasters, even to the blush cast all over it by the serried ranks of ruddy and belated claret glasses of a by-gone age. Oftentimes, too, these vacant scenes of ever-expectant revelry, as if but half satisfied with the measure of their melancholy, reflect themselves again in pendant mirrors of gorgeous and tarnished frame, while portraits of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli, in their noonday prime, hang patiently upon the wall, as if waiting to harangue the expected company on the Reform bill or the Irish Church. Nor do I like coming out of the cheerful sunshine, passing on the way upstairs, perhaps, some racy gossips in the snug parlour behind the bar, and taking my solitary seat at these ghostly feasts, while an uninterested waitress wheels away one file of pink claret glasses for space on which to deposit my pint of ale. Alas for these resplendent goblets in this our day of temperance or whisky! A draught of fourteen-shilling Medoc, at three shillings the bottle, once a week would be more, no doubt, than their average measure. Perhaps the two hundred per cent. profit, with which the British innkeeper successfully intimidates any possible wine-drinkers, is one cause of the absent-minded look of his table glass-ware. I dare say there was nothing of this kind at the Norham hostelry, but there might have been, for it looked sufficiently ambitious, and when such is the case, there is a conspiracy of all hands to drive the stranger into its wilderness of glass and napery and solitude. So I sought a humbler house of entertainment, where also were rods and creels, waders and waterproofs, in insistent evidence. The landlord was discussing the weight of the two or three fish killed by Norhamites that morning, and his guests, one of whom was fortifying himself for an afternoon campaign, disagreed about the amount of fresh water down, there being a difference of some three inches between them, which admitted of no compromise. This is the right kind of atmosphere in

which to discuss one's bread and cheese, spread by the landlord himself with much cheerful discourse. The pulse of the place is at least beating round you, for the behaviour of a great salmon river in all parts of Britain is of undying interest to the people who live on its banks, though most of them, of course, never themselves throw a line. It is a harmless, worthy, and even a romantic interest. At any rate, such gossip is much better company than Mr. Gladstone and the late Prince Consort in gilt frames and twenty vacant seats.

Norham church, standing by itself amid a spacious, level and densely packed graveyard, is one of the finest in Northumberland. Gospatrick, that earl who so failed to justify William the Conqueror's experiment in Saxon Government, and helped to bring his avenging hand down on the North, lies buried under the porch. It was in this church, too, as already mentioned, that the famous gathering of notables, and their several candidates for the Scottish crown, was addressed by Edward the First. Bishop Flambard, the founder of the castle, is thought to be also the founder of the church, on a site, however, long occupied by a Saxon edifice deemed worthy to hold the bones of the saintly King Ceolwulph, to whom Bede dedicated his history. The building has been much pulled about, but with its massive though rectangular tower and great length of nave and chancel, all of one elevation and under one low-pitched roof, the air of antiquity and importance is strong upon it. It is the chancel, however, that catches the approaching eye at once, with its row of five narrow, round-headed Norman windows and richly moulded eaves. Its east end, that in the Decorated period replaced a Norman apse, must, at the time of erection, have appeared a singularly inharmonious addition, but has been mellowed by centuries into merely an unusually sharp and quaint contrast between two styles; five lancets, that is to say, culminating in a single full-sized pointed window on both sides. Within, the arcade of the nave is Norman, while the tower rests on transitional arches. The mailed and cross-legged effigy of an unknown knight beneath a canopy in

the chancel is the only touch of human interest and antiquity, while the oak reredos is an importation, at what date I know not, from Durham cathedral. In the spacious well-kept churchyard, bristling with the plain austere slabs and short obelisks on which the Border people like to inscribe their oft-recurring names, are some remains of Saxon crosses that have been unearthed at various times. Adjacent stands the Vicarage, embowered in foliage, and approached by a handsome avenue of limes, while just across the neighbouring river the rising woods of Ladykirk make a harmonious background, and contain, moreover, a somewhat notable little church with a stone roof, raised by James the Fourth, after a narrow escape from drowning in the treacherous rapids of the Tweed beneath. Here, too, half a mile distant, is the first stone bridge above Berwick, which it is worth while to cross into Scotland and mount the ridge beyond, if only for the noble prospect down the Tweed, past Norham village, to the keep of the castle rising proudly above its wooded steeps beyond.





## CHAPTER VIII

### HEXHAM, BLANCHLAND, AND DILSTON

SOME word of apology seems due the reader for taking him to the banks of Tweed, and more than once within such close view of the Cheviots, of Wooler and Flodden Edge, of the Till valley, and all that most beautiful and historic corner of Northumberland, and then facing about, as in this chapter we must, for a fresh start from Newcastle. But I like to travel these regions over again in the spirit, with such as will bear me company, in the same months and seasons that I explored them in the flesh. It is true that I walked across the Upper Cheviot into Scotland, one soft July day, when the ferns were still growing, and the heather had not yet blossomed ; and on the other hand, spent many autumnal, as well as July days upon the coast. But the Cheviot that comes back to me, in spite of a more recent walk over it, on the only sunny interval of the past June, is the Cheviot of the preceding autumn, all draped in golden fern. The Till is the Till of the grayling rather than of the trout. The grain fields on the slopes of Flodden are shorn stubbles in memory, and not nodding their still green unripened heads, though I have seen them thus in two successive summers. The peles and castles of this once troubled corner return to me more often under grey skies, when whistling winds are already blowing against them their earlier burden of withered leaves, and I would assuredly have it so. There are temperaments for whose content sunshine is necessary every day, and all the time ; and individuals whose imaginations cannot work, nor their fancies play, nor their pulses beat with

normal vigour under sad skies. They have probably been born in the wrong country, that is all, and are deserving of respectful and genuine sympathy. There are others who like sunshine every day, not for its light upon land or sea, but rather because they can play about, without let or hindrance ; and for such, one country is very much like another, provided there are plenty of people to play with, and it is not too cold, nor too hot, nor too wet. But for many Britons of sensibility, grey skies and storms, in the country at least, are an intermittent æsthetic necessity. To the northern temperament they appeal, I take it, with greater force, and touch chords, that in the impressionable Southerner we must suppose have no existence. I do think, however, that for full enjoyment of Nature's wilder, and more sombre mood, you must have a stage worthy of it. For I admit that the average inland landscape of southern and middle England does not respond in the same way to the gloomy, the wild, or the grey ; I think countries need sunshine much oftener where there is neither mystery nor pathos, nor sounding waters, nor great solitudes, nor inspiring heights, nor any of the things that go out to meet a gloomy sky, or are in sympathy with a Scotch mist.

To come down, however, to hard fact, my movements in August were dictated by circumstances quite unforeseen, and by no sort of personal volition. Wooler, which at a distance, and in anticipation, had appeared to my misguided fancy as a modest market-town—which, in truth, was a sufficiently accurate forecast—containing possibly a few snug haunts to which anglers resorted, in most months excepting August, proved in the reality to be an August resort of the most compelling kind for the ordinary holiday maker. Its capacities, to be sure, are not great, but such as they are, I found them all pre-empted whole months, some of them even a year, ahead, and such holes and corners as remained made me feel relieved that at least I was a free man, and not a curate or a bank clerk, ordered into immediate residence there. Hexham was the alternative, or it became so now at

least, though, in the innocence of my heart, I had reserved that centre for September. This mere reversion of our programme, however, was of slight consequence, but it became really serious, when I had scoured the bran-new residential quarters of that otherwise ancient abbey town for half a day with absolute futility. Compared to Wooler, its resources in this respect are generous, but Newcastle and its suburbs had tested them to the full. Nor yet is Northumberland like the Lake country, Devonshire, or Wales, where every other farmhouse makes a business of harbouring the stranger. The farmers here are much too big for that sort of traffic, and those who are not, are—well Northumbrians; reserved folk, not yet, at any rate, accustomed to the notion, nor, I should say, well equipped for the venture. Nor do bowery villages, each with their half-dozen or so, simple, but sufficient snuggeries, abound as in these other regions. If you stood on a hill anywhere, and looked out far and wide over this Northumbrian country, you might almost swear that there was no holding in it of this kind. A friendly postmistress, however, at length proved my salvation. Some unforeseen accident had that very morning deprived an entirely respectable house of its expected tenants, and in five minutes I was inside it, and clinched a bargain that neither I nor my little party had cause to regret.

Hexham lies some twenty miles west of Newcastle, on the Carlisle line, and just below the junction of the North and South Tyne. It is an ideal situation from which to make the acquaintance of a large slice of the most beautiful portion of the county; and yet more lies adjacent to the most complete and striking section of the Roman wall, and handy to all of it. Moreover, it is in itself, for its charm of situation and venerable associations, a quite stimulating place of sojourn. The Carlisle express, too, carries you there in half an hour, while the slower trains facilitate your explorations thence both to the east and to the west. The railway from Newcastle follows up the Tyne, which almost at once a fine brawling river gradually shakes off station by



station, those disfiguring signs of industry that we here, at any rate, are glad enough to dispense with. One passes Ovingham, the birthplace of Bewick, with the ruinous towers of Prudhoe castle, the key fortress of the Tyne in former days crowning its hill. At Corbridge, one of the pleasanter little towns of the county, and of great antiquity, lying at the far end of its ancient stone bridge, one has left behind any trace of collieries worth mentioning, and has entered the clean as well as the romantic section of Tynedale.

Three miles beyond is Hexham, showing to great advantage from nearly any point, not excepting the railway station, which in truth provides a most effective view of the old episcopal town clustering on its outstanding hill, with its noble Abbey, Moot-hall, and Norman keep as its apex. The broad Tyne, in stream as ample, and even swifter than the Tweed at Norham, washes its base, and is here spanned by a fine stone bridge of nine arches which puts a finishing touch to a scene that is unique of its kind in Northumberland. The hill from which the town looks down upon the river is, in fact, a projecting ledge from a high back-lying ridge, that on the south, as on the north bank, shuts in the winding valley of the Tyne. With a population of some seven thousand, and a chief interest in stock and crops, Hexham is a clean town set in a clean country. If you look over to it from the far side of the river, which beneath the bridge breaks into a broad expanse of rapids, in stormy weather turbulent and white with foam, with the old abbey standing out against the sky, and the long slope of roofs and gables falling away from it on the three visible sides, it seems a place well worthy of an ancient fame, and of dignity hardly to be looked for in a situation till modern times so far remote. On the crown of the hill, and the centre of the old town, is an open and spacious market-square, till recent years one of the most picturesque in England. The west side is filled by the abbey, the tower, transept, and chancel of which are still standing in good repair, and in regular use as the parish church. Fronting it on the west side of the

square is the Moot-hall, a lofty and rectangular Edwardian building, beneath which runs a deep gothic archway, surmounted at each end by towers that still display their warlike character in corbels, for carrying platforms, in machicolations and narrow windows. Just through it is another yet larger tower, known as the Manor office, with its four centuries of manorial connection with the Archbishopric of York. Here, again, are massive walls ten feet thick, and narrow windows, and more corbels for siege purposes, when it was the point of resistance, in those times of stress which were so frequent. All these interiors are now used for civic purposes, while adjoining them is the old Elizabethan Grammar school, whose picturesque but limited proportions have been long discarded as inadequate to modern demands. This heart of Hexham, though no longer worthy of the unqualified eulogies it solicited from even mid-Victorian travellers, still survives the onslaughts of modern Philistines with some measure of success. They cannot, for instance, build out the abbey which dominates the whole scene though the east wall of the choir which fronts the square has been lamentably handled by some nineteenth-century restorers. Nor can they obliterate the stern Edwardian towers which face it. The long, open market-building in the south corner, too, has at least a century and a half to its credit. In the matter of those private dwellings and shops which now look out from three sides of this ancient scene of Hexham traffic and turmoil, piety and merry-making, the vandal, I am told, has been exceptionally industrious in the last three decades; that is to say, if you may call a man evil names who pulls down an old house, which perhaps is tumbling on the top of him, and erects one with no thought whatever for the appearance of its exterior. There is no Duke at Hexham, as at Alnwick, to curb the frenzy of the builder, to whom reverence for the past, or even respect for the eyesight of the present, has not merely no meaning, but is sometimes an object of derision. After all, Hexham market-place, though no longer among the best in England

retains even yet great qualities which its newer buildings, no worse than others of their kind, cannot wholly destroy. The streets leading out of it, too, are all on the cramped lines of a day when such limitations were a positive advantage; for at the troublous old Border times, when the beacons were fired, the stock were driven into the centre of a town, and the narrower the approaches to it, the more easily were they defended. Another admirable example of this may be seen in modern Penrith. It was in this market-place that the Duke of Somerset was executed, the day after the second battle of Hexham, in the Wars of the Roses, and with him a Border thief, who it is thought may have been the very man to whom Queen Margaret, in the previous fight there, had been so greatly indebted. Here, too, during the much later days of the *Pilgrimage of Grace*, throngs of armed men passed backwards and forwards, the ousting of the canons of the abbey with others in the neighbourhood, stirring the Borderers and their chiefs to fury, and those not piously interested to outrage and plunder, on both sides of the March. As late as 1761 the turbulent spirit of the dales ran high in Hexham, and a riot arising here, out of the militia ballot, was not quelled till fifty persons had been shot dead and three hundred wounded in the streets.

To the west of the abbey, adjoining its precincts, a pleasant demesne of undulating turf and ancient elms, known as the Seal, traversed by a brawling stream in a deep glen, provides an agreeable retreat both for reflecting age and unemancipated youth with its attendants. The reader will not care to be told that, beyond this again, spreading over a high hillside is a large residential suburb of Hexham, where the visitors who now resort here in such numbers every August find domicile. This off-shoot, however, is comparatively inoffensive; it in no way interferes with the ancient lines of the town, nor is it in itself any worse than other enterprises of the kind, and is better than some, being mainly fashioned of a cheerful-looking grey stone. Moreover, the philosopher who finds himself there for a month or two may

always find much consolation in the thought that he lives inside, and not outside, of a house for which he is not responsible, and that if its windows command considerable distances of a fine country, over which he has health and strength to wander at will, the æsthetic qualities of the exterior will concern him nothing. There is also a hydro in this quarter, a fact which may account for the older hotels of Hexham still affecting an honestly conservative and market-ordinary air and habit by no means wholly to their disadvantage. At the immediate back of the old town, too, spread sparsely in ample pleasaunces over the face of the long, steep slope for a mile or so, are the country houses of prosperous persons who do business in Newcastle. On this felicitous perch, with grouse moors behind them, a salmon river at their feet, and burns prattling everywhere within sound, they are as near their place of business as are people in Sydenham or Ealing, or other depressing areas of bricks and mortar, to the city of London, with an infinitely pleasanter and smoother half-hour of access to it. To the southerner—for we are all victims of environment—Hexham may even yet seem out of the way, set up here among the wild dales of the north. But after the union of the crowns, it took a fancy for calling itself the “Heart of Britain”; inspired, no doubt, by King James’ well-known remark while journeying southward to enter into his inheritance. “There is no longer any Border, this is now the centre of my kingdom.” The men of Tynedale, Redesdale, Liddesdale, and elsewhere gave him good cause, it is true, to eat his words, and good reason to ship as many as he could catch and put on board to his new plantation in Ulster. But Hexham, at any rate, caught at the idea, and retains the echo of it, which, if you take a map and a ruler, you will probably be surprised to find is not so very wide of the mark.

St. Wilfrid is the patron saint and founder of Hexham, as the builder of the great church on whose foundations and crypts the present abbey stands. The former was commenced in 674, when Wilfrid was Bishop of York. The

endowment was provided by his friend Queen Etheldreda, Egfrid's wife, who supported it by a gift of her dowry, covering what is now Hexhamshire, a territory roughly represented by three large parishes which remained on and off for nearly nine centuries a compact ecclesiastical domain, occupied by abbey tenants. Wilfrid, it may be remembered, was a monk of Lindisfarne, and at this time Bishop of York. But the pious, childless queen retired to a nunnery, and her successor in the king's affections did not love Wilfrid—the splendour of his proceedings and his wealth eclipsing that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and arousing the jealousy of the new queen, and even the king himself. When it was proposed to divide the northern diocese into those of Lindisfarne and Hexham, Wilfrid, who then held jurisdiction over the whole of Britain north of the Humber, strongly opposed the scheme, and announced to the court that he would appeal against it at Rome, which provoked the assembly to roars of laughter, so little was Rome then heeded by English divines. Wilfrid, who had contracted abroad strong Latin leanings, carried out his intention, but was so long away, that when he returned he found his church promoted to a cathedral, and the new diocese of Hexham already created. He had in his pocket, however, a papal mandate against this procedure, but when he presented it, the assembly laughed still louder than before, and the king imprisoned him for nine months. He became ultimately the third bishop of the diocese against the creation of which he had so violently striven, after having again held York for a short time, as well as Lindisfarne for an equally brief one. But he remained Bishop of Hexham a little longer, striving constantly against the pretensions of Canterbury over the northern sees, and at home a strong advocate of the Latin over the Celtic form of church ritual and discipline. He held at the same time the Monastery of Ripon, to which he was deeply attached. On his last journey from Rome, during a critical illness, the Archangel Michael paid him a visit, assuring him of four more years of life if he would build

another church at Hexham. This he did at the south-east corner of his earlier one, making it of circular form, for use, it is supposed, as baptistry and chapter house, dying at the appointed time, after a life full of energy and strife and architectural activity. So much for St. Wilfrid, to whom is due at least this brief recognition for the big place he still occupies in the regard of Hexhamshire, and for the many thousand Northumbrians, from his time to ours, who have borne his mellifluous name. The latter, oddly enough, was brought seriously into the ecclesiastical law courts during the prosecution of Bishop King of Lincoln, some twenty years ago—the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury's court over Wilfrid being cited as a precedent for that exercised over Dr. King. A most beautifully wrought manuscript of the four gospels executed for Wilfrid by an unknown hand, profusely and exquisitely ornamented, is extant; and, curiously enough, after some changes of ownership in this country, was purchased by the German Government, who are said to have refused five thousand pounds for it. As to the other twelve bishops who filled the episcopal throne at Hexham for the hundred and forty years of its diocesan existence, their record would be superfluous here. It was the ravaging Danes, not any church synod, that brought them and their diocese to an untimely end, when the last bishop fled for his life, and the noble church, monastery, and even the town itself were all laid in ruins.

In the year 1112, ecclesiastical Hexham was refounded by Thomas Archbishop of York. Whether he built the nave as a beginning, or found Wilfrid's shattered walls still standing, and restored and reroofed them, only to be destroyed by the Scots, is a matter of contention between experts; at any rate, there is no nave now. It will be enough for us that the transepts and choir which comprise the present church were begun in the twelfth century, and carried gradually to completion, though at what precise date is uncertain, and that it is a sublime specimen on a great scale of Early English work. The transept, which, in the

absence of a nave, forms one continuous block, is one hundred and fifty-six feet long, and sixty-four feet in height, while the absence of all church furniture on its stone floor still further sets off its great distinction. Lofty Gothic arches rising on clustered columns support the tower, which, with plain battlements and a single range of pointed windows, looks squat and massive, only rising between thirty and forty feet above the roof of the main edifice. The south end of this imposing transept is partly occupied by a remarkable stone staircase and gallery, which formerly led to the canons' dormitories, this long time swept away. The floor of this gallery forms the vaulted roof of the slype, by which the abbey is entered. The north end of the transept is filled by tiers of triple lancets, together measuring quite fifty feet in height, while similar lofty lancets above a long range of arcading occur on the west wall. The aisles on the east of the transept, on both sides of the screen that shuts off the choir, are enclosed behind pointed arches rising from clustered columns, leaving space above for both triforium and clerestory.

In the transept are several ancient monuments collected from various parts of the church, among them the only altar tomb remaining in the whole building, a tomb contemporary with the transept, and held by tradition to be the grave-cover of King Elfwald, who was murdered here in 788. There are two Roman altars, one of which by its inscription proclaims it to be a dedication to Apollo by the prefect of the camp of the Sixth Legion, "the victorious, pious, and faithful," and a few mediæval effigies and relics. But by far the most interesting object unearthed from the foundations of the church is a Roman mortuary slab, nine feet long. The verger, who many years ago assisted in its discovery, fairly glowed with his subject as he described to us the excitement accompanying the gradual revelation of this treasure under the careful pick of the expert. The treasure is well worthy of the good man's emotions, for it represents the figure in bold relief of a galloping horseman in

helmet, plume, and torque, with sword by his side and a standard in his hand. He has no stirrups, but rides on a saddle-cloth, while the horse, well bitted and bridled, is also plumed. Crouching on the ground beneath the rider's stirrup, in a grotesque, reptile-like attitude, is the naked figure of a Briton, with repulsive, bearded face and grasping a short sword. Whether this is merely an allegorical representation of the Roman triumph over Britain, or immediately suggestive of the method of resisting cavalry by stabbing their horses from below, common among the natives, and often resorted to in later ages by the Welsh, we may not know. But, at any rate, we do know who the young man is, for a Latin inscription beneath has been easily deciphered, and reads in English, "To the gods, the shades, Flavinius, a soldier of the cavalry regiment of Petriana, standard-bearer of the troop of Candidus, being twenty-five years of age, and having served seven years in the army, is here laid." To my mind, these brief, lucid, matter-of-fact reminders in lettered stone of private individuals of the Roman garrison are among the most eloquent messages from the dead that British earth gives back to us. Though most remote of all, they seem so much more in sympathy with modern conditions than anything from the Saxon or the feudal age, mere fragments as they are from a long full epoch of which we know practically nothing, yearn as we may for greater light, but what such dead stones tell us. For Flavinius, substitute the name of some young officer in the Indian Staff Corps, and the stone might almost stand in a cemetery on the banks of the Ganges. Compare it, for instance, with the vaguely inscribed grave covers of clerics of this very abbey, who died a thousand years later, preserved in the choir in times of which we know a great deal; or even with the oldest Christian monument in the church, that of a gentleman thought to be of William the Conqueror's time, simply inscribed, "Johannes malerbe jacet hic"

The choir, now used as the parish church, is entered



through a fine painted wooden rood screen with loft intact, of the Early Tudor period. Among a great deal of elaborate design, it carries paintings on the front of the bishops of Hexham, and of various other holy men. The choir itself is a superb piece of work, though fatally injured by the restoration of its east end some fifty years ago, when an east window on new and quite inharmonious lines was inserted, and several interesting chapels on its outer side swept ruthlessly away for the apparently insufficient reason that they were somewhat dilapidated. A fifteenth-century shrine to the Ogle family which filled a bay of the choir arcade, though in good preservation, was also destroyed. One might fancy that a pupil of Wyatt, who raged like one bereft through so many English cathedrals a little earlier, had been here at work. But the splendid body of the choir still remains as the old builders left it, with its six pointed arches surmounted by a triforium of Norman arches, and an exquisite Early English clerestory above, resembling the famous one at Romsey Abbey. Some twenty odd of nearly forty sedilia were saved from the ravaging hand of the restorer, and are now ranged along the side walls. Within the altar rails is a relic of really exceptional interest, namely, the original fridstole, or sanctuary chair, which is believed to have stood in Wilfrid's Saxon church—for the pious founder had secured this right of refuge for his creation, the boundaries extending about a mile all round it. The limits were marked by four columns, the Hexham one at first stood in the middle of the Tyne, but the floods proving too much for it, precision had to be sacrificed and it was placed, so the chronicler Richard of Hexham tells us, on the north bank; White-cross fields on the east, and Maiden-cross on the west, still recall the localities where two of the others stood. The sanctity of these boundaries held good till the time of Henry the Seventh, and with modifications till that of James the First. The old stone relic is thought to have served also as a consecration chair for the Hexham bishops, while Camden went further and held that the kings of Northumbria were crowned in it.

Nor must we forget the helmet of Sir John Fenwick, who fell at Marston Moor, that rests on a bracket on the north wall, above the altar. The warrior's skull is in Newcastle museum, which does not seem quite fair to him. There is no analogy, it is true, between that lonely Fenwick helmet, which has long ceased to breath defiance, and the extremely provocative habit of hanging gloves over the altars of Border churches. Hexham being the metropolis of so many of the warlike Border families, it must have required some exceptional nerve to hang a glove within its chancel. It was, perhaps, the test of supreme daring. Scott, at any rate, thought so when he penned Rokeby.

"Edmund, thy years were scarcely mine,  
When challenging the clans of Tyne,  
To bring their best my brand to prove,  
O'er Hexham's Altar hung my glove.  
But Tynedale nor in tower nor town  
Held champion meet to take it down."

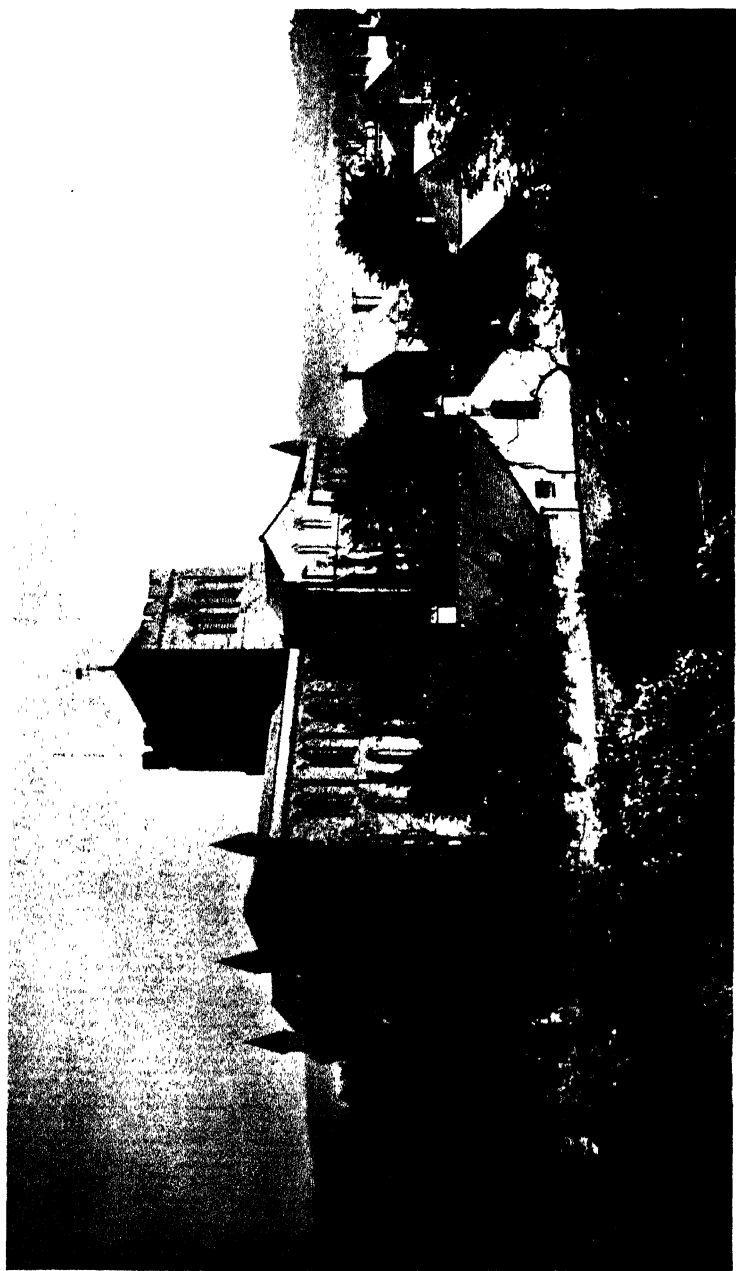
As a matter of pure antiquarian and historical interest, the crypt of the old Saxon church, which burrows beneath the transept of this one, is the most engaging, and is held to be almost unique of its kind. It was only discovered early in the eighteenth century, and is thought to have been used for the reception and exhibition of the relics brought from Rome by St. Wilfrid. It consists of a central chamber, some thirteen feet by seven feet, with an ante-chapel and two passages, one for the entrance and the other for the exit of pilgrims to the relics. Both chambers have round barrel roofs, while the passages are covered with large flat stones. We descended thither with the worthy and zealous veteran before alluded to, who appeared to have taken an active hand in all the underground work that had been going forward. It is good to see an enthusiast as deputy-keeper of either a church or a castle. Their theories are often of the stoutest, their views uncompromising, and quite right that it should be so, unless they are automatons; and one pities the automaton, that depressing and depressed wight, set to rattle the dry historic

bones of a place whose spirit he cannot conceive. The enthusiastic custodian is often, on the other hand, contemptuous even of the guide-books, whether justly or unjustly. How could a man who spends his days and years in a Gothic church or a Norman keep, and is, happily for himself, a zealot, but without specific training, be otherwise than contentious. I remember encountering the Franco-Gallic custodian of a Welsh Border castle, who was all of this and much more, for he was one of the most voluble persons I have ever met in my life. A would-be antiquary from boyhood, his existence had been a long struggle in baser occupations, and he had just found paradise and a pound a week on the banks of the Wye. No visitor, for some reason, had entered his stronghold for days, and as I approached it, he almost leaped on me in his fierce hunger after such a period of intellectual starvation. For myself, I was in a state of stupor when, after an hour and a half, I left him just commencing it all over again with a newly married couple, and his impassioned tones resounded in my ears long after I had passed out of the castle gates. The sixpenny guide, which he was bound to sell, and which he spurned in brave and quite reckless fashion even as he sold it (for the amateur author was the owner's relative), lent the fervour of unsparing criticism to his eloquence, more power to it !

Down in the crypt at Hexham, in almost uncanny contact with the foundations of the tower, are numbers of Roman stones utilized by the early builders and bearing significant marks, while over one door a portion of a Roman altar has been fashioned into a lintel. The late Dr. Bruce, of Roman wall renown, says the whole crypt is built of Roman stones, for though Hexham itself has no definite traces of that conquering race, Corbridge, close by, has very definite ones indeed. I do not think I have ever experienced a stronger thrill than when, thus buried in a dark burrow with a lantern under the foundations of Hexham tower, we were pointed out a slab bearing an elaborate inscription to the Emperor Severus, who was in Britain and died at York



HO NHAM ABBEY



A.D. 211, and to his two sons, Marcus Aurelius Antonius and Publius Septimus Geta. But the effect I allude to was in the obvious erasure of the second son's name, who conjointly with his brother had succeeded Severus. For the younger one had been murdered by the elder, and his name erased in consequence from all monuments in the Roman Empire by order, and here in a dark crypt beneath Northumbrian soil was the third name not quite obliterated, but scarred from end to end with a pick or chisel, as if by some minor official who, in perfunctory fashion, had made the round of mile-stones and other monuments bearing, as was the custom, the name of the reigning Emperor.

It is high time, however, we sought the upper air, and, what is more, the open country. I have spent so much time in the abbey it is well there is no nave, and though the foundations remain, it seems doubtful if it was ever completed. There was a movement going forward when I was there to build one, and I was now just about to write "Heaven forbid!" when I read in the daily paper that the first stones had been actually laid—apparently with enthusiasm. I wonder what Freeman would say?

It was on the perfect morning of a perfect summer day, one of the few with which this August was destined to favour us in Tynedale, that I set out for Blanchland. Those who have read the late Sir W. Besant's excellent, if a trifle lengthy, romance of "Dorothy Forster," will need no telling why Blanchland claims its pilgrims. It is not only for its association with that spirited young woman and her luckless family at the time of the Derwentwater rising, but for the quite peculiar architectural attractiveness of church, manor house, and village, for its isolation from the world, and its singular charm of site. Now the Tyne leaves the Durham boundary some miles east of Hexham, and becomes wholly Northumbrian, just as the Tweed, after doing duty in much more emphatic fashion as a barrier for about the same distance, enters Scotland. South of Hexham and the line of the Tyne and the south Tyne, there is a strip of Northumberland

some dozen or so miles in width and about thirty in length from east to west, a rough parallelogram thrusting its end against Cumberland and lying partly on that county but mainly on Durham. For the most part this is a wild, broken, and beautiful region and continues thus, moreover, long after it has crossed the Derwent into Durham, or over the less defined line into the Pennine Range of Cumberland. Blanchland Abbey, manor-house, and village lie on the sequestered banks of the Derwent, some eleven miles south of Hexham. But they are eleven perpendicular miles, much of which, I believe, those who travel by coach or carriage cover at a walk. For my part I took a cycle, as having in view a return route of another kind, nor did I in the least grudge leading it a considerable part of the way, for the novelty and interest of the surroundings favoured a slow progress up the long hills and down the steep stone-strewn pitches. The byways of Northumberland are always lavish of wandering stones, even when the road-bed is tolerable, and the Blanchland road, imposing enough on the map, is very much of a byway. It climbs the long ridge at the back of Hexham, affording in its upward course the very choicest of all prospects of the town, sloping up at an apparently steeper angle than from any other point to its great dominating church and group of Norman towers. All of these from this same ledge stand out with peculiar nobility against the green vale of Tyne far spread below them to the east and to the west. At the back of the ridge the stony road, after a long descent, plunges down with scant ceremony on to an early sixteenth-century bridge under whose mossy arch, flung across a chasm, the streams of the Devilswater tumble with much commotion towards the woods of Dilston. This is Linnels Bridge, a secluded and romantic spot, though only two miles from the "Heart of England," whose summer visitors apparently regard it as the limit of their pedestrian adventures. But, secluded as it is at most times, the haunt of the kingfisher and the water ouzel, the lair of the mountain trout who abound in

its turbulent amber waters, it has seen the history of more than one century in the making. For here in 1463, about a mile above the bridge, on almost the only level space on the whole course of this deep burrowing stream, Queen Margaret, with a force of Scots and French, fought the battle known as Hexham Levels. The Yorkists, who were encamped here, not only repulsed the attack, but utterly routed the Queen's force. Then occurred the familiar incident of the capture of this courageous lady. But while her captors were squabbling over her jewels and booty, she escaped or was carried with her little son into the wooded defile close at hand, through which the Dipton burn, at this day as at that, comes sparkling down through a maze of winding woods. A cave is still shown, though now almost closed up, where the royal lady was harboured by the rude outlaw on whose protection she threw herself.

But Dipton, or Deepdene, is beautiful enough without the cave in its old bearded larch trees on the slopes, springing from above a world of undergrowth, and its little open glades shaded by stalwart beech and sycamores, on to which the brook comes breaking out from its leafy cover. There it was that the menacing robber was hypnotized by the frank declaration of the courageous Queen, and converted to a friend with the sequel which we all know. The French chronicler—who is, I believe, the only authority for the story—says nothing about a cave or any sojourn in the dene, but that the outlaw took his royal charges from the battle-field in the direction of Scotland as fast as possible. It was here, too, a year later, where this very bridge was afterwards built, that Montague with four thousand men attacked the Lancastrians from Hexham, who were endeavouring to defend its predecessor. It was then Sir Ralph Gray ran away and left Somerset to defend the hill we have just descended with but five hundred men, which he failed to do, and was caught, and, as we know, was executed in Hexham market-place. But this was not all ; for in the rising of the 'fifteen some of its earliest whispers were heard about this streamlet's banks,



Men went and came along them stealthily, leaving notes for one another in hollow trees. And this was natural enough, for Lord Derwentwater's seat of Dilston is but three miles down the burn ; miles, too, as enchanting as high enclosing steeps clad with verdure and furrowed by a sparkling torrent can make them, while Blanchland of the Forster's, as we know, lay just over the moors. For if Dipton Dene is beautiful so is the Devil's Water, indeed more so in a sense, for there is more of it, and as a brown moorland-bred stream pursuing a rocky channel through continuous woodland is one of the most beautiful of all Nature's creations, one cannot have within obvious limits too much of it. There is a pious sentiment, just legible, inscribed on the centre of Linnels bridge, which reads, "God preserve Wilfrid Erenhton who built this bridge," with the date 1530.

Crossing it our way southward lay over boney roads and a solitary, though not as yet quite moorland country. Groves of larch at intervals screened the path, and breathed mournful sighs in the fresh summer wind which chased fleecy clouds across a blue and kindly sky, and drove shadows with faint and hurrying tread over sunny pastures and hay-fields, only in this late country just gathered into pikes. A few lingering bluebells still bloomed in these thin plantations, the wild broom flowered and hollies bristled on the road's ragged edges, and even the foxglove, that haunter of Wales, but so much less in evidence in the north, was wasting its favours on this desert air. We have no longer here the big farmers of East Northumberland, and no great homesteads dominate these somewhat lonely uplands. Indeed, till I reached Slaley, a stern grey-looking village crowning a bare ridge, there was not anywhere much evidence of humanity.

No passing stranger would give a thought to Slaley ; a stoney, austere village looking back over hilltops innumerable, among which Hexham and the Tyne valley lay entirely smothered, and facing southward over a treeless valley on to the grouse moors known as Blanchland Common, where I could see the white trail of my future road laboriously

climbing. But Slaley has been a place abounding in qualities that make for a racy past, though you might not think it. Not exactly the past beloved of antiquaries, nor of historian, but one of deep-chested, simple, sporting, song-singing, strong-headed, and stout-stomacked folk of the John Peel type. A friend of mine not only knew the Slaley of those days well, but possesses various clippings from local newspapers of fifty or sixty years ago, which reveal this now lonely wind-swept village as a centre of much outdoor and sporting hilarity. It was, in fact, the headquarters of a trencher-fed pack of foxhounds and their followers, an unconventional company whose members wrote and rhymed about one another and their doings, as well as rode enormous runs, though not, perhaps, very fast ones. We are here on the edge of wilder Durham, and that Mr. Surtees was very much of that county needs no reminder. When I have further said that the apocryphal but immortal Pigg of Jorrock, whose sayings, like his master's, are deservedly classic utterances, is supposed to have had his origin in a Slaley sportsman, this is surely fame enough. A note of its former quality may possibly linger in a rhyme I noticed over the door of its single house of entertainment, beginning—

“If you go by and thirsty be,  
The fault's on you and not on me.”

It is six miles hence to Blanchland, and the road soon climbs out of the great bare enclosures on to open grouse moors, where the heather was by now in bloom and this whole uplifted tableland lit with its purple fires. An occasional grouse, who would really have something to fly for in a few days, some nervous old cock belike, sprang now and again before my guileless tread, lifting others here and there in his course, who, but for his fussy and noisy warning, would have remained snug enough. Not a soul was stirring to-day on road or heath, over these miles of high moorland, nor was there any sound, but that of the constantly suspicious grouse. I listened for a curlew, or a whaup as they

have it in these parts, but heard none, though it was full early yet for their flight to the sea-coast; and looked also for a chance scud of golden plover. But there was nothing with wings to be seen, but the little wheatear, springing in short flights by the roadside; and the unfailing titlark, that commonplace-looking little fellow, fit companion rather in outward seeming for the sparrows in the stackyard, but in truth of a singularly romantic turn of mind. No altitude daunts him, no wilderness dismays or even depresses him, you may have passed far above the haunt of all songsters, and be on the look-out for kites and falcons, but the titlark will almost certainly be jerking composedly along at your side, as if he owned the waste.

Away to the south and south-west, just across the deep vale of the Derwent, rose those further solitudes which almost alone redeem the county of Durham from the disfigurement of the despoiler. I had rambled a little in early life about the upper waters of the Tees and Wear, and to-day I could mark over a vista of nearer wastes the brooding shoulders of Stanhope Moor and Chapel Fell, and other brown and misty giants, whose names I had long forgotten, that feed the streams of either the Yorkshire or the Durham river. The last pitch of the descent to Blanchland and to the Derwent valley is prodigiously abrupt, but the prospect of the old abbey and its compact dependent village nestling at its foot, with the river sparkling close at hand through narrow meadows of brilliant verdure, and the moors rising again abrupt and bold beyond them, made a lasting impression on my mind. Its aloofness too, as actual as apparent, from the outer world, added a further charm. I have never seen anything quite like this village. It fills the narrow strip between the base of the hills and the Derwent, and in formation, as the author of "Dorothy Forster" remarks, is suggestive of a decayed college. For you enter through an old fortified gate-tower into a spacious parallelogram of low-pitched dwellings, with the manor-house in one corner. There was doubtless a corresponding gate-tower at the south entrance of the

square, where the road now runs out of it on to a high stone bridge over the Derwent. From this latter point, the wide sunny square of grey and brown stone cottages, many of them very old and roofed with weatherbeaten flagstones, the battlemented gateway at the entrance, the squat massive tower of the abbey church at the side, with the wood rising straight up behind and the high moors overtopping all, offered a delightful picture. So ancient a village, still standing as it does to-day in its original attitude of defence, beside its old monastic building, in the heart of silent hills, has no equivalent within my memory. The Derwent, too, is a fine rocky stream, rushing impetuously under its stone bridge, as venerable as the village, and glittering down its green meadowy trough between the overhanging moors.

When the colony of Norbertian Canons from the Abbey of Blanchland in Normandy settled here, in the time of Henry the Second, and called the new foundation after the old one, William the Lion of Scotland was claiming Northumberland, and had a recognized suzerainty over upper Tynedale. "The province was then renowned," says an old chronicler; "there was no country so well provided with the necessaries of life, nor inhabited by a race more universally respected." The vicissitudes of Northumberland were violent indeed. For only a hundred years previously it had been swept bare of every living thing by William the Conqueror, a fact that confronts one most uncomfortably in all ethnological estimates in connection with it. The Nevilles seem to have endowed these Norbertians liberally, and its abbot was summoned to one of the first Edward's parliaments. Little is known of their early history, but tradition has it that an army of Scots were returning in the same reign from a raid into Durham, and in misty weather lost their way upon the moors above, at a place called "Dead Friar's Hill," when by an evil mischance they caught the sound of bells in the valley beneath, and descending like vultures on this unsuspecting snuggerly, sacked and burned it.

Froissart describes the coming here of Edward the Third

soon afterwards in quest of that Scottish force of 24,000 men under Douglas which we alluded to on Berwick walls as ravaging this part of the country. They were encamped at Stanhope, and Edward, with nearly thrice their number, was wandering miserable and helpless among these dreary mountains, and scouring Hexhamshire for food for his starving and soaking men. "The banner-bearers hastened over heaths, mountains, valleys, rocks, and many dangerous places without meeting with any level country." Frequent alarms of an attacking enemy were caused by the stags which, frightened and confused by the great host invading their solitude, "ran distractedly in whole herds among the troops." Eventually they arrived at the Derwent, "near a monastery of white monks which had been burnt, called in King Arthur's time (*sic*) Blanchland." Here the King turned out his horses to feed, and was received by the abbot, who led him to the church, and confessed him, after which Edward ordered masses to be said. After the Dissolution the place fell into ruin, but was part of that Forster estate which, with Bamburgh, went to Lord Crewe, and afterwards to the trustees of his will, who restored the church, then in ruins, and preserved the manor house, now a large inn of much deserved repute for the antiquity of its chambers and passages, and the interest of its associations. The abbey church of to-day is calculated to inspire the stranger with as much perplexity as interest. The fine old fortress-looking tower stands at the north end of what is apparently the main body of the building, but is in fact a large north transept, from the southern end of which the choir extends eastward at right angles. This last, I was told, had recently been rebuilt, and an aisle had been obviously added to the large transept. The church was locked, of course, with about as much reason as that on Holy Island, nor could I get tidings of the key. Some friends who were here a week or two later, and made more serious endeavours to track it, returned baffled. For myself I made no such endeavour. The impressiveness of the old tower, that had no doubt repelled

many a Border foray, and the eccentric pose of the rest of the fabric seemed sufficient. The interior, from what I gathered in a local handbook, was one of those more suited to an interesting paper by the diocesan architect in a strictly local or strictly technical publication; speculations, that is to say, on the site of earlier buildings, together with a purely craftsman interest in the various restorations and additions.

In spite of the report of a fine tower arch, and an interesting slab or two, I abandoned the interior of Blanchland to those more directly interested in mason's marks, and the piecing together of old work and new, in groping for the unfathomable motives of eighteenth and nineteenth century restorers, and other technicalities of a like nature. The whole locality was so engaging, so peaceful, and so steeped in sunshine, that there seemed no sufficient occasion to ruffle one's temper by a key hunt. On turning into the Crewe Arms, however, not merely for its reputed æsthetic qualities and inspiring atmosphere, but with the mundane purpose of refreshment, there issued sounds of revelry of which no suspicion had escaped into the outer air, not indeed of speech or song, but of that steady clamour of knife and fork created by twenty or thirty British burghers, who have driven a dozen or fifteen miles to dine in one of Nature's sanctuaries. The narrow passages reeked of smoking joints, and were in the possession of heated and distracted domestics, bearing more burdens to a feast worthy of the most sumptuous abbot who ever waxed fat in these monastic halls. It proved to be a club dinner, and such an aggressive one that, not being a member, I felt almost a guilty intruder, and stole thankfully into a low picturesque coffee-room, with a broad window commanding a pleasant lawn which abutted on the abbey church. Here were planted a gentleman and lady, also not of the chosen band, but at the same time not apparently of the kind to slight their lunch, though obviously of the opinion that they had themselves been slighted. In time, however, the clash of steel upstairs grew fainter, and in the lull the first note of the post-prandial orator was heralded

by the rapping of knife handles. Then at last an exhausted maiden confronted my choleric and hungry neighbours, whose heated remarks left me on my part really nothing to add, had I felt ever so aggrieved.

The monks' refectory is enclosed in this later manor house, which now does such picturesque duty as the Crewe Arms. When the club had descended to take the air, and flavour it at the same time with much tobacco smoke, I was shown the house, which contains many quaint passages and rooms, among the latter a fine banqueting-hall. Here, too, the British tourist's demand for a pivotal object in a romantic atmosphere has been judiciously met. For Dorothy Forster's chamber is diligently pointed out, and a little later I saw the whole club happy and red-faced regarding its window with wrapt attention through the smoke of their cigars. Besant, in his novel, makes this house the residence of Thomas Forster during the intrigues preceding the rising, and I have no doubt had good grounds for so doing. Blanchland had been Forster property till the purchase of their estates by Lord Crewe, then their relative by marriage, who without any heirs himself would doubtless have left it all back to them, but for their unfortunate escapade. Here, at any rate, young Forster is depicted as living by the grace of his aunt and her episcopal husband, looking after the estate, hunting its game, and practising that economy which had not hitherto been a family virtue. Here, too, the good-natured, countrified, not very sharp-witted young man is gradually drawn into the toils by shrewd adventurers and misguided enthusiasts, the fact of his being a Forster and a Protestant giving him a value far above his merits; and hither came betimes the high-minded, and but half-willing, figure-head of the conspiracy, Lord Derwentwater, riding over from Dilston, near Hexham, to pay those addresses to the fair Dorothy which belong wholly to the novelist's imagination. Indeed this was inevitable, or he would have had few lady readers, a fact of which so practised a writer was no doubt more than conscious. For, if memory serves me

rightly, these are the only love passages in an excellent though somewhat tedious historical sketch. Even they are rather flat, as the willing fair, for whom the faithful tutor also cherishes a secret and hopeless affection, is forbidden to accept his lordship on account of his faith, and we all know that he very soon found consolation. It does not seem to me quite fair to take these liberties with historical personages, and in this case to portray the poor Lady Derwentwater of reality as merely catching the heart of a blighted being on the rebound.

But the memories of the 'fifteen, though thick over many parts of Northumberland, are thickest at Dilston, and Dilston is only two miles from Hexham. It is hardly worth noting that I passed through it on my homeward journey from Blanchland, as I made several little expeditions thither, partly on Lord Derwentwater's account and partly on others, here irrelevant. It was after leaving Blanchland that the main purpose for which I had pushed a cycle for so much of the way thither, instead of discarding such dubious assistance, was achieved, but the achievement, though it remains one among a thousand memories I would not dispense with, calls for no special record here. I ran for many miles along an excellent road lifted somewhat above the Derwent, which coursed through grassy meads, while on my right the purple moors of Durham rose towards the finest solitudes that county, as I have said, still boasts of. Sometimes the heather pressed actually on to the highway, while farmhouses of mellow stone, and occasionally suggestive of some story out of the common, lay below the road and above the river bank. In due course I crossed the Derwent again at Shotley Bridge and turned northwards towards the Tyne. By this time I had worked to the eastward of the Blanchland moors, and the long ridges over which my still rather solitary road lay were enclosed in great pastures, protected here and there from the winter blasts by narrow belts of woodland. Looking back into Durham from their ridges I could see in the distance a forest of tall chimneys, those of Consett, I think,



belching clouds of white smoke into the evening air ; the beginning of a murky land, inhabited by another type of man from the rural Northumbrian, and speaking another tongue. I descended again to the Tyne, having encountered few wayfarers in a dozen miles, at the picturesque woods of Riding Mill. Thence turning up the broad highway from Newcastle to Hexham, as the sun was setting, I sped easily along to my first glimpse of Dilston, towering amid its woods over the junction of the Devil's Water and the Tyne, and so to my journey's end.

The romantic streams of the Devil's Water retain their romantic qualities to the last. For at the point just mentioned, where they pass under the main coach road to their almost immediate junction with the Tyne, you may stand on the bridge and watch them breaking out of the wooded gorge they have rioted in for so many miles, to run down under still pendent foliage and in broad whimpling shallows to your feet. And high above the woody banks of the stream, at the outer fringe of the lawn of a later country house, stand what is left of the halls of the ill-fated Derwentwater.

The rising of the 'fifteen is commonly held a small affair compared to the drama of the 'forty-five, and in most minds is but a hazy incident. But it was not a small affair in Scotland, while for the Northumberland of that day it was serious enough, as so many of the rash adventurers were Northumbrians gentle or simple. Dilston is far more eloquent of its memories than perhaps any other place in the county, not because the movement was hatched here, for it was not, nor that Lord Derwentwater was a leading conspirator, for this was not the case ; but when things were ripe, he was almost automatically involved, not merely as a relative and early playmate of the young prince, but still more as the most important of the Stuart sympathizers and co-religionists in the northern counties. His dignified end on the scaffold has identified this first Stuart rising with his name more than with that of any other, and left perhaps





a rather distorted impression of the man in the mind of posterity, as a partisan and leader. The confiscation of his great estates, held in part to this day by Greenwich Hospital, the beneficiaries, helps to keep alive the memory of the 'fifteen in Northumberland, just as the Crewe trust suggests the Forsters and indirectly the same hapless incident. The undoubted personal charm and high character and popularity of the young earl, the romantic quality of Dilston, the pathos of this ivied remnant of a once great mansion and the seat of a powerful and honourable race, is very real and very rare. For Dilston, at the fatal moment, had just been enlarged and refitted for a fresh and more sumptuous *régime* than any in the Radcliffe history and under the most auspicious circumstances. Nor did any other family succeed the Radcliffes. Its empty halls, just as the last earl left them for his progress to the scaffold, were abandoned to the bats and owls, and the material by degrees carted away for other purposes. What is left is the earlier portion, the tower and rectangular fortress residence of red sandstone, enlarged and adapted in James the First's time to the increasing amenities and greater security of even Border life. This stands roof-high but roofless, retaining, however, its mullioned windows and fireplaces as intact as the storms of a century and a half could be expected to leave them, still beautiful, ivy-draped and tree-embowered. All other traces of the once great establishment have been swept away, but a turreted gateway and the small chapel where the family worshipped; while in the vault beneath many of their coffins, including that of the headless earl, reposed till quite recent years. In the gorge below the ruin, the Devil's Water makes music, and by its banks the "Lord's Mill" still stands among the trees.

One of the original lords of Dilston lies vaguely in stone effigy in Hexham Abbey. But the Radcliffes came here from their ancient seat on Derwentwater—whose ruins a thousand people know for one that has heard of the site of Dilston—at the close of the fifteenth century, marrying the

heiress and uniting the Cumbrian and Northumbrian properties in the family. They intermarried with the Fenwicks, Greys, and other Northumbrian stocks and were wealthy and conspicuous. The Radcliffe, who reconstructed the house that we now see in ruin, paid £137 in nine months for brewing malt, so numerous and thirsty were his retainers. On thirty servants, however, by the same account, he only expended £60, which would look as if the domestic of that time drank twice the value of his annual income in beer. Sir Francis Radcliffe was arrested in the popish plot, merely as a Catholic, however, and released on heavy bonds. Later on, already created Earl of Derwentwater, he followed James the Second into exile. His son, the second earl, married Charles the Second's daughter by the Duchess of Cleveland, Lady Mary Tudor, and their son was the ill-fated victim of the 'fifteen. The latter was reared among the little group who surrounded the exiled James at Versailles, and was educated with the young prince, in whose cause he lost his life. In 1710, when he came of age, his father being then dead, he returned to England and to his estates, where he was received with unbounded satisfaction as the head of a house second only to the Percies, and the Percies were at that period absentees. A lovable, high-minded, conscientious youth, the young earl acquired quick popularity.

" O Derwentwater's a bonny lord,  
Fu' yellow is his hair,  
And glinting is his hawky 'ee  
Wi' kind love dwelling there."

However strong his political sympathies, he had certainly made up his mind to accept the first George as a disagreeable but inevitable fact. His charities and good will were lavished on Catholic and Protestant alike, and all accounts paint him as a model landlord. He married the daughter of a Dorsetshire Baronet, a Miss Webb, and in 1714 the young pair went into residence at Dilston. In the next year Jacobite plots began to brew on both sides of the Tweed. The earl's birth and antecedents made it almost incumbent on his

honour to take a hand in any definite movement, but he does not seem to have concerned himself much in bringing one on, nor even to have been greatly in the confidence of these over-sanguine plotters till he was all but committed. And, indeed, he had an enormous stake at issue, youth—wealth, popularity, domestic happiness, everything was his. None of the principals, some of them adventurers with nothing to lose but their heads, seem to have confided much in him till the time came that his name and wealth were wanted. When Government was assured that a plot was brewing and issued warrant of arrest, Lord Derwentwater was naturally one of the first persons to secure, if only as a mere precaution, and he then felt that he had to make his choice without preparation or much time for thought. It is said that while he hesitated his wife clinched the matter; for a tradition has it that she flung her fan down and suggested that he should hand her his sword. He left Dilston when he heard of the approaching warrant, and remained in hiding, sometimes with his friends and sometimes, it is related, in a cottage at Newbiggin, where the Dipton Dene joins the Devil's Water. It is all rather cloudy, but it is obvious that the poor young man was torn by conflicting impulses. A local legend tells how the supernatural figure of a woman appeared to him in the romantic gorge of the Devil's Water at Nunsbrough, upbraiding him for not being already in arms, giving him at the same time a crucifix as a talisman against sword and bullet. He was at Dilston, however, early in October, and crossed the river to consult at this eleventh hour with Mr. Errington, of Beaufront, a Catholic squire of ancient family, but then distrustful of this untimely adventure. His older and more prudent neighbour is said to have taken the earl to a hill above his house, and rubbed in his urgent remonstrances by pointing across the Tyne to the fair domain of Dilston filling the valley and ranging far over the hills. The earl, however, replied gloomily that it was too late. On the next morning he mustered some thirty of his retainers at Dilston, mounted and armed them, and, with his brother

Charles, set off for the rendezvous at Greenrigg, near Woodburn, in Redesdale, where the local Jacobites had at length decided to declare open war on George the First on this 6th of October. Patten, their chaplain, who went through the campaign, and has written fully of it, attributes this somewhat precipitate and ill-advised move to the fact that warrants were out against many of the leaders, with a certainty in their minds that they would be "clapped up in several prisons, and being examined separately, none would know what his friend was saying, and they might thus unwittingly betray each other."

The Scottish Jacobites at any rate had a stronger case, and were already out in force. It was supposed that thousands in England were only waiting for a sign, and that a fleet and army from France were preparing for their assistance. The Derwentwater party crossed the Tyne at Corbridge, halted at Beaufront, and so to Greenrigg, where Thomas Forster and others brought up their numbers to sixty. Thence they proceeded to Rothbury, Alnwick, Warkworth, and Morpeth, proclaiming King James the Third everywhere, and swelling their force to three hundred, including an influx of Borderers, whose long slumbering instincts must have leaped into life again at such a chance. Newcastle met them with closed gates, whereat the little army of horsemen journeyed back to Hexham, where Lord Kenmure, with two hundred men from Galloway, joined them. General Carpenter had all this time been advancing with a force of regulars from the south, while Argyle was in arms for the Government in Scotland, so it was decided to concentrate with Lord Mar's second and smaller Scottish force of fourteen hundred at Kelso, under Mackintosh, making two thousand in all. There they listened to a sermon from Mr. Patten, who preached from the text, "The right of the first born." There is no need to follow the disputes that arose, or the injudicious councils that prevailed, as the rebel army wandered aimlessly along the Cheviots. The majority, including, it is said, the Radcliffes, wanted first to secure Scotland as a base. The Northumbrians, however, and some

others, believed in the twenty thousand Lancastrians that were depicted as burning for the fray. The southern plan prevailing, most of the Scottish Highlanders went home, and the combined force, growing again on the march to nearly two thousand, mostly mounted, men, entered England at Longtown. Near Penrith ten or twelve thousand militia were drawn up to oppose them. Being armed mainly with pitchforks, entirely unmartial and very hungry, the sight of the Jacobites proved altogether too much, and the rustics fled incontinently, the invaders eating the dinner in Penrith that had been spread for their officers, and proclaiming James the Third afterwards. On November 10 they reached Preston, having, so far, found the Lancastrians almost failures as Jacobites. There, however, great numbers joined them with their servants and raised the army to three thousand. Preston might have been easily defended, but Forster's ignorance of war, lack of nerve and common sense, together with divided councils, bungled everything. The natural defence of bridge and river were neglected and the Jacobite army huddled behind barricades in the town. When General Wigan, however, with four or five regiments, arrived and attacked the place on the 13th, he was repulsed with the loss of over three hundred men. Next day General Carpenter arrived, and Forster, without apparently consulting his staff, submitted to an unconditional surrender. There was great confusion and outspoken indignation. Derwentwater had distinguished himself in the fight of the previous day, and, with many others, was for cutting his way through the enemy. However, we all know the end, when seventy gentlemen, among whom Northumbrians prevailed, and one hundred and forty Scotsmen of the same quality, together with fourteen hundred men, surrendered unconditionally.

With the treatment of the bulk of these we have nothing to do, but it was, on the whole, savage. Deep snow, and the hardest winter of thirty years, had set in. The prisoners were confined in frigid churches and jails in Lancaster and at Chester. Numbers died from exposure and fever, and



numbers were shipped to plantations ; many of the better sort were shot. Two hundred were despatched to London, including Derwentwater, his brother, Forster, and Lords Kenmure, Nithsdale, Carnwarth, Nairn, and Widdrington, and other leaders. They rode through London two and two, their arms pinioned, and a soldier with fixed bayonet leading each horse. Of the five lords condemned, two were pardoned, and one escaped. Derwentwater and Kenmure alone suffered the extreme penalty. Desperate and pathetic efforts were made by Lady Derwentwater and other wives concerned to save their husbands. But the king himself, who was frequently waylaid by them and their relatives, seems to have been little touched. Derwentwater's demeanour, both before and at his death, commanded respectful admiration. He was executed on February 24, 1716, on Tower Hill, and his remains were brought to the family vault under the chapel at Dilston. His brother Charles was condemned some weeks later but escaped to France, and lived to fight in the 'forty-five and die on the scaffold. He occasionally paid secret visits to England, and had a fancy for treading the deserted shades of Dilston, and frightening the rustics almost to death, who mistook him for his brother's ghost, that in their imaginations had already established a footing there. Of this eccentric person it is related that, having been refused sixteen times by a widow, and denied further admission to her, he descended the chimney of her apartment, and throwing himself at her feet, melted her heart by so heroic an act of persistent devotion.

Forster, who was condemned, escaped by means of a false key supplied to him by his intrepid sister, whose winter journey to London on horseback behind a blacksmith is, of course, a familiar story, though the performance of Lady Nithsdale, who saved her husband by changing clothes with him and risking the vengeance of the Crown, seems at least as heroic. The more prolonged nature of the Scottish operations, the battle of Sherriffmuir, and the futile landing of the Chevalier, do not concern us here. With a good leader, the

Scottish rising would have been as formidable as that of the 'forty-five. The Dilston estate was sold some thirty years ago to a private purchaser. But when still in the hands of the well-known Mr. Charles Grey, as administrator for the hospital estates, it provided a prolonged and delightful sensation for the people of Hexham, and much entertaining material for the London press.

Now, Lord Derwentwater left a son, who died a youth in 1731, and in 1868 a lady of unquestioned talents, and, according to some, great personal attractions, sat down on her boxes in front of the ruins of Dilston, and proclaimed herself a granddaughter of this youth, whose death she declared had been simulated, and heir to the Derwentwater estates. She styled herself Amelia, Countess of Derwentwater. She produced a pedigree, and gave elaborate reasons for the pretended death of her so-called grandfather. She was well supplied with a number of relics said to have been taken from Dilston and the house on Derwentwater while the last earl lay in the tower, and stored on the Continent ever since. She and her friends next proceeded to roof in one of the ruinous rooms in the tower with tarpaulin, and to take up her residence there in company with her collection of family relics, and even hoisted the family banner on the castle wall. She petitioned Parliament, and also issued warnings to the Dilston tenantry to pay their rents to her. Incredible as it may seem, a few obeyed, or attempted to obey, this extraordinary demand. She gave Mr. Grey, who lived at the later manor house, no end of trouble. For after he had ejected her with some difficulty from her ancestral ruin, she encamped on the roadside, and became the object of pilgrimages not merely from Hexham, but from all over the country. Quite fortuitously it so happens, that the immediate neighbour and friend of the late Mr. Grey of Dilston, and intimately associated with him throughout this extraordinary business, is an old acquaintance of my own, and he gave me recently, by his own fireside in Scotland, the whole strange story. Local accounts all dwell on this eccentric claimant's good looks. My friend, who

ought to know, denies this, but credits her with amazing cleverness, though obviously to him from the very first a rank impostor. But this was not the view of numbers of otherwise sensible persons in the locality, who became her champions, and the lady herself became the cause for months of serious breaches between old friends, such as those of us who remember the Tichbourne case can well believe. There are elderly men of sound sense still living in and about Hexham to whom it is not, I believe, advisable to mention the name of Amelia, Countess of Derwentwater, so greatly were they taken in. Thousands came to see her in her gipsy-like encampment by the high-road below Dilston, and as many believed in her. Some advanced money.

As the story of the Bogus Countess is permanently embalmed in the history of Tynedale, and is apt to be told with the embellishments natural to an incident that is sensational rather than important, I will ask the general reader's indulgence for closing this chapter with a brief statement written for me by the above-mentioned friend, who, as already remarked, was together with Mr. Grey of Dilston more personally and intimately concerned with the transaction than any other person in the country, and resident at Dilston throughout it:—

“In 1868 a lady calling herself Amelia Radcliffe came to reside in Hexham, and alleged that she was descended from the Earls of Derwentwater, the memory of whose noble qualities and good deeds still lingered among the inhabitants. She was rarely seen, and was said to occupy herself in gathering together ancient furniture as well as pieces of armour and military accoutrements, which, as the sequel proved, were to be used in furthering her scheme for getting possession of the ancient estates, which, since the attainder of the earl, had been the property of the Commissioners of Greenwich Hospital. She was also said to have in her possession a birth certificate of an Amelia Radcliffe, but no one who saw her close would believe that her real birth could have been of *less* than fifteen years' earlier date. Her plans were prepared in perfect secrecy, and she proceeded to carry them out in this same autumn, when Mr. Grey, the agent for

the estates, was surprised to find her sitting in her chair of state, in what was formerly the banqueting-hall of the now ruined castle, with her ancient furniture and weapons displayed, accompanied by a few friends. When challenged, she replied that she was the Countess of Derwentwater, the real owner and possessor. As she seemed quite serious in her intention of holding the fort, the agent was obliged to call in the aid of estate labourers, who, as she refused to be detached from her chair, carried her out in it, and set her down in the highway near at hand with her furniture. Having thus been removed by force, she refused to go voluntarily any further, and her supporters proceeded to erect a shelter for her as the weather was very cold, procuring old doors and planks, covered with stack-covers and tarpaulins, and in this hovel she remained for several weeks, expecting, no doubt, a rising of the people in support of her claims. Great sympathy was shown her by all classes; food and comforts were sent to her by many, and thousands flocked to see her and her habitation. So much so that there was no room for travellers to pass along the highway. At the first meeting of the district Highway Board, this was so clearly set forth, that instructions were given to the waywarden of the township to have the obstruction removed, which, after a show of resistance, was done. The 'countess' took up her residence for the winter near Shotley bridge, where among the colliers and iron workers she had many friends, and the excitement gradually abated in the Hexham district. The winter passed quietly, but towards spring there were rumours of pressure being brought to bear on outlying farms, for the tenants to pay at least a portion of their rent to the claimant, and with some success, as the 'countess,' with her posse of pitmen and idlers, by a show of strength induced several of the tenants to buy her off by a payment. She made her next move on the rent day of the Dilston tenants, held in the Anchor Inn at Haydon Bridge, where she appeared with an imposing band of supporters, and announced her intention of collecting her rents in the hotel. This demand for accommodation, to which she was entitled as a *bonâ fide* traveller, having come about twenty miles by road, was unwisely refused by the innkeeper, as he had plenty of room in the house. This aroused the strong feelings of both parties, so that there was a risk of violent scenes, but after some altercation it was granted, and she held her audit without molestation and without success. Little was

heard of the 'countess' till May of the following year, when just before the term she took possession, with her furniture and supporters, of a cottage at Dilston, occupied by a ploughman who was known to be a 'countess man,' and who was leaving at the term. The tenant of the farm, having engaged a ploughman to take the place of the former one at the term, naturally had to make arrangements to get possession, and to use all necessary force to compel the 'countess' to evacuate it. This, of course, was done in perfect secrecy, as if any action were known to be contemplated, an immense crowd would have assembled and hindered its success. On the term-day at noon, the previous tenant having left that morning, and the 'countess' in possession, and the new tenant, as well as a body of police, being timed to arrive about a quarter of an hour later, the farmer went to the cottage, and, knocking at the door, got a reply to his request that he might have an audience with the 'countess' from an upper window—that she refused to see him. The farmer then called to one of his labourers to fetch a sledge hammer, and broke the door open. On entering her room upstairs he explained to her that his new tenant was on the point of arriving, and requested her to remove quietly, but she treated this proposal with scorn, and with many threats of punishment for his presumption. Knowing that the police had arrived, he informed her that he would give her five minutes to make up her mind, and then if she did not move he would be obliged to put her and her company and effects out on the road. When the farmer went to hear her decision, she was violent, and determined to remain. So, with the help of two or three labourers, she and her goods were removed on to the road, and as soon as the last stick was out, the new ploughman's furniture was put in.

"However, as the police were in force, and were ready to make her remove from the highway, she had her chair taken to the opposite side of the road, but by measurement it was ascertained that it was encroaching on the tenant's ground on that side, and she was moved on to the road again, so between the farmer and the police she found the situation so untenable that she was obliged to take her departure to Corbridge, where she had many supporters, who, had they known what was being enacted within a mile of them, would certainly have struck some blows for the sake of their beloved 'countess.' She was scarcely ever mentioned by any of her supporters

again, which one can readily understand. She disappeared henceforth from the neighbourhood, and, I believe, spent the remainder of her days at the mining village of Consett in Durham."

Thus ended the career of a remarkable and barefaced impostor; a lonely woman, hitherto unsupported, totally unaccredited and unintroduced to the neighbourhood. That she gained such wide support is the best tribute to her cleverness, which made as much impression on my friend and informant as did the impossibility in his eyes from the very first of her being what she claimed to be. The London papers sent their correspondents down, and more than one of them became, for the moment, such violent "countess men" that they treated the reading public to violent diatribes against the defenders of the Dilston property.

## CHAPTER IX

### CORBRIDGE TO CHOLLERFORD

**A**LMOST immediately opposite Dilston, hugging the foot of the long slope that rises from the north bank of the Tyne, is the large village of Corbridge, which, like its now vastly more important neighbour of Hexham, is no mere collection of houses, but a place where things of import were continually happening in ancient times. Long before St. Wilfrid founded Hexham and created at the same time a smaller monastery here, the Romans had founded Corbridge and, what is more, constructed a bridge over the wide and formidable waters of the Tyne, some of the piers of which were visible till quite recently. No river in England probably has been so severe on its bridges as the Tyne. The seven wide and graceful arches that span it here, and lend further distinction to the little town, are the only ones in its entire course that have remained unconquered by its fury, which they have now braved for nearly two centuries and a half. In 1771 every other bridge on the river was swept away. Beneath this one can still be sometimes seen the remains of its predecessor, which was built in the time of Henry the Third, and made Corbridge an important strategic point throughout the whole period of the Border wars. One may fancy the little Derwent-water cavalcade clattering over it to their fate, some on coach or plough horses, and all carrying weapons they had never seriously wielded, while at the further side, adjoining Corbridge on the west, stretching from the river bank to the summit of the distant ridge, are the noble woods and green parklands of Beaufront, whither they were bound for their first rendezvous.

Lifted well above the river bank, and facing cheerfully to the south, there is very little here of the austerity that broods over so many places in the north. The main, and most obvious of its arteries, running parallel with the river, is spacious to a degree, and fringed on either side with modest residences of diverse structure and date, but mostly of natural indigenous appearance, some of them luxuriantly muffled in creepers ; one or two showing ancient fronts, while another is annexed to a lusty pele tower in fine preservation. There is abundant overhanging foliage, too, and pleasant patches of garden beneath, with suggestions of peaceful shades behind. All is well ordered and well looking, due perhaps to the fact that certain Newcastrians of discrimination have entered into possession, and had no cause and probably no desire to uproot things more than necessary. Then there are some few brief and narrow ways of utilitarian aspect leading into a small market-place. The predecessor of its present cross was fashioned out of a Roman altar, and the church which fills one side of the space was built in part during Saxon times of material from the large Roman station that lay near by to the westward. There was surely a breezy absence of prejudice about these earlier Christians, or, dare we say, of a sense of humour, too, in thus mounting the emblem of their faith on altars inscribed to pagan gods, and fitting them so frequently into the spare corners of their churches? We, at any rate, are glad enough to have the altars, and may be thankful that monks and not Covenanters had the handling of so many. I am not going to say anything about Roman finds at Corbridge, which were receiving, indeed, fresh encouragement when I was there, because there is every prospect of getting to the station of Chesters in the course of this very chapter, and if I were to pause at every Roman camp in this once great centre of Roman power, this little narrative would develop into an indifferent catalogue of their remains. But Corbridge, the Corstopitum of the Romans, situated where Watling Street crossed the Tyne, covered twenty-two acres, and seems to have been actually the largest



station in the north, and among other relics recovered from its site, the famous *lanx* or silver dish, weighing about one hundred and fifty ounces, demands mention. It is now at Alnwick, and carries figures in bas-relief which are believed to represent the Judgment of Paris. In the Saxon period again, for the last two centuries of the Northumbrian monarchy, Corbridge was even more the actual centre of its power than Bamburgh, which had become too dangerously near the frontier.

Once upon a time there were four churches in Corbridge, not an unmixed blessing according to one chronicler, as they were the haunt of felons from the county gaol and elsewhere who took advantage of the sanctuary they afforded. The fine old church surviving in these times, when people have devised so many various routes to Paradise, must now be ample for all needs. The tower, as already related, and part of the nave is Saxon work of Roman materials. The most striking feature, however, is the sturdy pele tower still standing at the edge of the churchyard, where the parson lived secure, and no doubt sheltered his friends, when the Scots visited Corbridge, which they did constantly, to say nothing of those predatory cosmopolitans who dwelt by the waters of the north Tyne and Rede and amid the wilds of Bewcastle. King John, always acquisitive, was so struck with the signs of ancient grandeur at Corbridge that he instituted mining operations for buried treasure in all directions, and indeed there actually had been a mint here in the latter days of the Northumbrian Kingdom. Robert Bruce quartered his army in Corbridge for a long time, and it was during his fierce struggle with Edward the First that Bruce, or his captains, made a bonfire of the town school and its two hundred scholars, whom one is surprised to find at their desks amid such a clash of arms and such a chronic hurly-burly. A dozen years later he burnt the whole town, for the rebuilding of which many mighty oak trees were felled at Bywell, now a picturesque village a mile or two down the river, the last, perhaps, that may fairly be called so on the Tyne.



WIGON HALL



We started one morning of fair promise in August for a day's walk in the broken country that spreads back from Corbridge to the line of the Roman wall. It was not on this occasion for the latter's sake, as on this eastern section it has practically disappeared, but for certain relics, mostly of another age altogether, which my companion, a son of the soil, assured me would reveal themselves at intervals along our proposed line of march. First and most highly appraised of these was that of Aydon hall, or castle, the very uncertainty of classification here hinted at being in fact some tribute to its attractiveness; for Aydon is neither the one nor the other, but a great fortified manor-house of the class of Stokesay, near Ludlow, and of the same period. It was a short two-mile walk thither, and when we had mounted the bank above Corbridge by a lane—everything under about fifteen hundred feet, be it noted, is a "bank," on the northern as on the Welsh Border—we followed a field footpath, in due course dipping into a woody dene, and above its further cliff saw grey walls and towers looming gloriously above the foliage of great trees, while a prattling burn struck harmonious chords in the ravine. Crossing it and mounting the steep by a winding path, between the stems of tall oak and ash trees, this grim thirteenth-century fortress house reared itself aloft right across our path. The sky, too, had suddenly blackened, and a passing storm moaned in the tree tops, and beat against the battlemented walls. For my part I accepted this sudden fit of elemental temper with more than complacency, so did my companion. We had not come here to a picnic, nor for a view, nor yet to make sketches, but to dream dreams, if so inadequate a phrase may be used for the flights one's fancies take before the mute eloquence of such places as this.

Aydon was built in the thirteenth century, and has been little pulled about. It is all in its favour, too, that it continues a simple farmhouse, and still unravaged by the innovations of a more exacting social life. For though the property in early times of various territorial magnates, notably the Carnabys, it seems rarely if ever to have been the residence

of this type of person, but a grange, pure and simple, though in size, dignity, and strength, a worthy enough seat for a Carnaby, a Clavering, a Fenwick or a Grey; a place that has been concerned with securing its own rather than distant adventures, though plenty of illustrious Scottish invaders have sat down before it. Standing on the high brink of the ravine, it offers much the same stern front to us as it did to them: buttressed, battlemented, stone-roofed, and pierced with three stories of small-pointed, or square, double-light windows, and mere slits on the lower floor. The outer wall of the main building is nearly flush with the slope. Massive crenelated towers support the angles; and where no buildings present their impregnable-looking backs to the line of defence, the original curtain wall is still intact. There are three courts, and in the small inner one, leading to the entrance, is an exterior stone staircase, leading to a large pointed doorway, within which is the great hall. Several imposing portions of the original fireplaces remain, and over one may still be seen the arms of the Carnabys. Everywhere facing the courtyard, as overlooking the ravine, are the small double or single-light windows, either round or square, with wide splays, showing the immense thickness of the walls. The same windows are seen even in the stables, where the arched roof and the very mangers are of stone, eloquent after all these centuries with defiance of the Borderer's torch. One outer court on the edge of the ravine is now a pleasant plateau garden, overlooked by grey walls and towers; while leaves rustle in profusion above the murmur of waters in the hollow beneath. There is a spot just here known as "Jock's leap," down which a Scottish raider of that name jumped for his life, while the rest of his captured companions were being flung neck and crop from the tower by Sir Robert Clavering.

The storm had ceased, but the skies still held and, as it proved, retained their gloom as we turned northward, leaving the courtyard of the old fortress noisy with the clamour of a flock of sheep, that had been driven in from their pasture for some purpose connected either with their well-being, or an

approaching market. A short mile along an open lane, between pastures that I was told were among the best in Northumberland, and associated in past times with some of the kings and queens of the shorthorn herd book, and another fortress house confronted us, lying at its ease and in the open among them. It is permissible to think that lands which old records show to be exceptionally dear and cultivated with unusual assiduity, even in the thirteenth century, warranted the fortifying of these two great granges in their midst. Halton, however, this other one, served as a regular domicile for various potent persons, one or two of whom were in the raiding, as well as in the grazing business. We did not enter here, but the battlemented tower is a very striking one, pierced with arrow slits above the square-headed windows of the first storey, while a round turret on corbels stands out at each corner of the battlements. Two low wings abut from the tower of fifteenth and seventeenth century work respectively. The whole being now occupied, I think, as a vicarage, and set amid pleasant gardens, makes a singularly harmonious picture. It is not stern and sombre in aspect and situation, like its older neighbour of Aydon. Even the intensely mediæval and warlike-looking tower loses something of its austerity from the low warm-looking manor-house beneath it, the garden that blooms around, the rich open slope on which it lies, and the far-reaching views over the vale of the Tyne, which it commands. According to Mr. Bates and Mr. Hodgson, from whom, when united in matters Northumbrian, there could scarcely be any appeal, Halton was one of several manors, left at the Conquest, in possession of a Saxon owner, to be held of the king in *capite*, and in the twelfth century it was certainly thus held by the Thane Waltheof de Halton. More interesting than this bare fact is that of a dispute regarding the right to a portion of it having been settled between the above-mentioned Thane and one Simon de Roncester by "wager of battle." It is a little disillusioning, however, to find that both claimants fought by deputy, the honour of the combat and the lands

remaining to the Halton champion. The Haltons were a tenacious race, remaining in possession till near the reign of Edward the Fourth. Carnabys followed, and in a legal suit, held in 1391, during which the christening date of a young Carnaby in the adjoining church required corroboration by witnesses, some quaint touches of everyday life are preserved; nothing in themselves, but nevertheless such trifles as bring those inscrutable ancients a little nearer. John de Hole, for instance, remembered the day, because he bought a horse of the child's father, and one sympathizes with him, well realizing how readily an infelicitous horse deal might have burnt that day into the memory of the good John. John Strother, again, while hunting a hare, actually met the nurse carrying the child to church. Richard Crasters' horse fell with him riding back to Dilston from the christening, or from the christening feast, no doubt, and so gave him good cause to remember the day. Nicholas Turpin, who was also at the festival, seems a little inconsequent, for the incident that fastened the day on his mind was, that while riding home he thought he saw a fox breaking out of a wood with the huntsmen after him. Possibly John Strother's hounds swopped in the afternoon on to what in the fourteenth century and for centuries afterwards was the ignobler game.

The little church where the christening took place five hundred years ago still stands above the roadside, but entirely rebuilt save for a portion of the east end. Here, too, in strange company with the gravestones beneath the trees, is a battered Roman altar, though for that matter the entire house at Halton is, I believe, built of stone from the Roman wall. For within half a mile is the camp of Hunnum, out of which, though not exhaustively explored, many relics have been secured. We passed by its grassy site and on to the patch of high common land, famous throughout Northumberland as Stagshaw bank, where a fair, of nothing like, however, its ancient notoriety, is still held. What Weyhill was to Wiltshire and North-West Hants, and, like that one, an out-of-the-way, uplandish spot, so was Stagshaw bank a stamping-ground

for the racy and turbulent folk in whom the blood of the raiders still ran strong even when cattle, horses, and sheep were no longer lawful prey, but subject to equivalents in kind or cash. There is a curious story of an affray here occasioned by the outrageous proceedings of a family of Widdringtons, degenerate scions, if scions they were, of that famous Border stock. It has nothing to do with cattle or sheep, or the legitimate objects of the gathering, but with a nefarious trade in human cattle that these people had apparently engaged in with much success, namely, the kidnapping of likely Northumbrian lads for the Jamaica market in slaves, or at least in indentured white labour. This was at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and several worthy young peasants had been spirited away by the Widdrington gang, who had established a sort of terror in these parts by their iniquitous and high-handed proceedings, enforced, too, with fraudulent pretensions to government authority, which seem to have imposed on the people. Now it so happened that Mr. John Hall, of Otterburn, "mad Jack Hall" as he was called, who was himself "crimped," according to his defence at his trial by the Jacobites of the 'fifteen, became the fortuitous agent in putting an end to these persecutions. For it so fell out that he had made an appointment with a young man, in his employ, to meet him at the fair, and on reaching the ground was surprised to see his servant being led away by a horseman whom he recognized as a Widdrington. Hastening up he demanded an immediate explanation; the serving man was obviously in a state of nervous bewilderment, while the other blustered and declared that the youth was in his keeping, and that he should be accountable for him to no one but the queen. Even Hall, noted for his fiery temper, seems to have been under the spell of these scoundrels, for he appears to have tried a course of persuasion and even entreaty before resorting to more effective means. This at length failing as well as his short temper, he drew his horse across the road and refused to let Widdrington pass till he showed his credentials. Upon this the other drew his sword and, holding



it towards the choleric J.P., exclaimed, "This is my commission." "Then we will test its truth," replied Hall, descending from his horse, throwing off his cloak and drawing his basket-hilted sword. The other had no choice but to follow suit, and was, moreover, a fine swordsman. After a long and furious encounter, Widdrington's weapon was struck from his hand and his life lay in that of Hall. The latter granted him so much, but a crowd in the mean time collecting, he was so roughly treated that the squire's generosity seemed likely to prove unavailing. The miscreant, however, did escape with his life, but there was no more slave crimping in Northumberland. Poor Mr. Hall, who was accounted a cheerful and kind-hearted, if heady, person, seems to have experienced through life the rubs of fortune. His house at Otterburn was accidentally destroyed by fire. Soon afterwards an extraordinary flood on the Redewater washed away his crops and stock, visitations interpreted by the common people as evidence of Divine wrath in that he had not prevented the famous duel, mentioned in an earlier chapter, which resulted in the death of Ferdinando Forster and the hanging of Fenwick ; a negative offence surely for the time and country. Lastly, as already hinted, he was drawn into the 'fifteen affair against his will, but selected nevertheless as one of the victims of royal vengeance, and after being five times reprieved, he was hung at Tyburn.

We were now out upon the line of the Roman wall running parallel with the Tyne, and just here, some four miles to the north of it, to Newcastle. Throughout this whole section of twenty-five odd miles the masonry has practically disappeared into the solid metal, with which General Wade created his famous but now little-used road from Newcastle to Carlisle. The occasion of this was the salutary lesson of the 'forty-five when it was found impossible to move troops across to the defence of the Cumbrian capital. It is a solitary highway, even hereabouts, running westward on the line of the wall to the North Tyne, with the precision that distinguishes its whole course, though not actually grass-grown as sometimes

in its wilder stages beyond the aforesaid river. We had left the fatter uplands behind us at Stagshaw bank, as we set our faces along the military road toward the Great Roman Camp of Chesters in the deep valley of the North Tyne, five miles ahead. The country around was neither moorland nor waste land. Indeed, I dare say it was worth a pound an acre, but it was lonely and sparsely fenced, which was well, for the skies were sad and the wind sighed in the great ash trees that turn many a bleak Northumbrian road, for brief and welcome snatches, into a stately avenue. Nor anywhere have I seen the ash flourish and thrive as it does in Northumberland. It has no great qualities of leaf in spring-time, like the beech and the sycamore, and is sometimes provokingly tardy. It has no autumn splendour to speak of, nor has the sycamore, that glory of the first summer woods and the first sport of autumn winds, any at all; a natural enough sequence, as the leaf-bearing period of most deciduous trees is much the same if measured from the moment of their budding. Late to start, though in this notoriously capricious, tenacious of its summer colouring so long as it can hold its leaves, the ash will time and again bring back the mocking memories of June above one's head, even when October is wearing fast away, and the mountains white, perhaps, with an early snowstorm. Oftentimes in Wales and the North have I seen quite deep snow gleaming through the leaves of large ash trees still in full summer dress, though the green be a dull, frost-bitten green to be sure, and the leaves hanging limp, to be swept bare in one night by a single storm. For no tree disrobes more precipitately nor flaunts for a briefer or more uncertain interval that delicate saffron which so well becomes it. But for myself, in full summer I like nothing better in the way of timber than these great ash trees by the road side with their twinkling leaves, that whisper so mysteriously in the faintest airs and toss and stream so wildly in a gale.

There are not many of them, nor, indeed, of any trees, along the line of the Roman Wall. Indeed, one would wish no timber here. The very spirit of the wall is against the

stir of woods or clamour of harvest-fields. We were not yet, to be sure, in its really wild section, but Wade's road on top of it, with the Vallum close at hand on the left, and its own fosse on the right, strode away over sufficiently bare ridges ahead of us, while to the north we overlooked a third of mid-Northumberland. Neither true moorland, nor yet a region chained and bridled to any appreciable extent by fences, spread out before us. Hedges of the ragged Northumbrian sort flapped here and there their tops in the wind, while it whistled cheerily through their bare poles beneath. But the general effect was a mighty vista of open country, of shadowy greys and greens, patched about irregularly with dark clumps or belts of woodland. A distant manor, a homestead, or a group of cottages, showed at wide intervals, or what seemed to us so. There were both highways and byways, beyond any doubt, coursing through and about it, though you might well fancy it easy to mount a horse and ride over pastures for a dozen miles without let or hindrance. It was only on a closer scrutiny one realized that the ordinary obstacles of civilization were all there, if widely stretched out. There was nothing here, at least, approaching the trim or the rectangular; one might almost be overlooking, though Heaven forgive me for the comparison, some great stretch of sparsely wooded, thinly settled, rolling prairie such as you may see in the Canadian north-west. Much more appropriately, one might fancy it the old half-derelict Northumberland of the raiding days, refusing even in these times of peace and plenty to be trammelled with overmuch enclosure, and reduced to the appearance of a chessboard. If a claim to some working acquaintance with the landscape of almost every county in England and Wales be not accounted an immodest one, I should like to record that I know no one that, as a whole, could be in any way likened to Northumberland. And in this connection I have no futile order of physical merit in my mind, nor if I had could I possibly give Northumberland the first place, high one though it merits. Striking as it all is, no portion of it has any exact counterpart elsewhere. But

there are large regions—roughly speaking, the middle regions—that offer a type of scenery differing from any known to me; not field for field, nor even, perhaps, mile for mile, but in a general survey as a characteristic whole. Space and distance for one thing are so continuously about your path; you are never anywhere cramped. However conventional the immediate foreground, the wild seems always calling somewhere within sight, and often bursts upon you unawares at the very next fence. That the county has a note of its own above most single counties there is, I think, no question even in a purely physical aspect, though it is next to impossible to divest Northumbrian soil, even for a moment, of the glamour of its past, and regard it from the point of view, let us say, of a landscape painter. There is a frequent note, too, of sadness and pathos in the scenery; but that is, of course, purely physical. It is not the pathos of Ireland, where centuries of unmitigated depression seem reflected on the face of a country adapted by Nature to the harbouring of such memories; nor, again, the more detached and less poignant pathos of Wales, where the echoes of an heroic, but hopeless, unequal racial struggle of no modern practical significance are recorded in the names of hills and fields. No wail of bards comes along the Northumbrian dales. The Border ballad stirs altogether different chords within one. Rivers of blood have been poured out in old Northumbria with greater suffering probably from torch and spear to the square mile than ever lacerated even Wales or Ireland. But, then, if one may speak in metaphor, the Northumbrians liked it. A thousand widows and orphans may have wept and starved, but, then, a thousand other widows and orphans across the Tweed would sooner or later do the same thing, and accounts be squared. Neither the one nor the other in a historical sense have ever regarded themselves but as communities, who for several centuries engaged in a prolonged and voluntary entertainment of the most sanguinary nature, at the memory of which in the abstract they are both rather pleased than otherwise, particularly as they left off quits, and

shook hands at the end of it. Moreover, being of the same stock, no disturbing note of racial antipathy is present. The romantic flavour of Northumberland is boisterous, racy, strenuous, Homeric. No statistics of slaughter, no ghastly suffering, can make it otherwise, however the gales may sigh and however sad at times be the landscape. The shadow of a strong man armed rides everywhere about the land, and that of a stout-hearted, large-limbed female philosopher sits in the pele house quite ready, if need be, to drive the cattle into the barmekyn, pull up the ladder to the front door, and await events with resignation. The West Marches have been in a literary sense submerged by the Lake poets. One may venture this much, I trust, without sacrificing one's veneration to those gentle genii who one and all passed through life on the Border apparently untouched, or almost untouched, by its spirit. All the imagination a well-meaning pilgrim may bring to Cumberland is exhausted at Wordsworthian shrines, and he never reaches the fords of Solway, nor gets on the track of Kinmont Willie, nor thinks of the Grahams of Netherby, nor often recognizes the pele towers that stand so thick about the edge of the Lake country, and some actually within it. No familiar poets in the past but Scott have sung of the Northumbrian borderland. The names of Akenside and Leyden, both more or less natives, mean nothing to the southerner. But nameless Northumbrians have contributed no little to the many volumes of old Border minstrelsy, sonorous and racy, with the clash of steel and the ring of galloping hoofs, with lives held lightly, and of quarter neither asked nor given, of maidens ready to leap up behind their lovers, and stab the latter or themselves should the venture prove their ruin. Nothing could express the rude passion of a Border race in love or war with half the eloquence of their own spirited lays in their own racy Saxon, though the north side of the Border has been immeasurably the most prolific. The wail of the dead is in it, to be sure, often enough, but it is the wail foreshadowing a tolerably assured revenge. The genius of later Northumberland has found its chief expression

along the lines that create Stephenson's and Armstrong's. It has not, I think, run much to verse or even prose. A faint reflection perhaps of the old Border poetry, attuned to gentle themes, may be traced in a small company of old-time fox-hunters and anglers who have invoked the streams and hills of their affections in verse that at least comes from the heart, and stirs the sympathetic soul in good Northumbrian Doric. I have seen somewhere quite a little volume of lays, dedicated to the Coquet alone, which for the feelings expressed, whether or no for the method of expression, are not unworthy of that romantic stream. Of higher verse known to readers outside Northumberland and to the London critics, Mr. Wilfred Gibson is, I think, the only native singer who has achieved a place among the younger poets of to-day. And the mention of Coquet reminds me that our horizon here was bounded by the bold outlines of Simonside and the mountain heights through which that impetuous stream runs down to Rothbury from the wilds of Cheviot.

A lonely inn, built of stone hewn at the expense of Imperial Rome, a blustering shower and the natural cravings incidental to noonday, conspired somewhat felicitously to our refuge in a deserted stone-flagged parlour, where, on an oak settle, before a trestle table, we discussed our ale and bread and cheese, while the storm beat on the windows, and the big trees above, with roots sunk deep in buried Roman masonry, tossed and moaned. Silent enough as this old military road is now, when better ones and a railroad follow the Tyne to Cumberland, it was the track frequented in former days by the Scotch carriers, whose calling seems to have been an important and sometimes a risky one. Some of the taverns that lived on their custom have long hauled down their sign. This one exists, perhaps, by the grace of Staghaw Bank fair, declined though its glories be. All the way from Newcastle hither, Wade's road has pursued its steadfast course on the ruins of the Roman wall, turning with it here and there in sharp angles, but never once wobbling or curving. It has been carried, too, as the Wall

was carried for its own obvious purpose, along the crests of the highest ridges, though not anywhere are these to be compared to the crags we shall find it climbing later. And in close company with both these tracks travels that Vallum or turf wall, with ramparts and fosse, which forms so ever-green a subject of contention among experts and antiquaries. Nowhere during the whole route of twenty-five miles, from the coast to the passage of the North Tyne, does this mysterious dyke depart a long stone's throw from its neighbour. The conflicting theories as to its origin and import will, doubtless, crop up, in another chapter, when we face the other great Roman work in its most perfect and most inspiring section. Hunnum, or Halton Chesters, the camp just passed at Staghaw Bank, is the fourth great station from Wallsend, counting that of Pons Ælii, buried in the hurly-burly of Newcastle. At some of these and at other points there are yet remains of interest. But this section would not often be included in anything but a purely antiquarian pilgrimage, as it bears no comparison in interest to the more westerly one across the North Tyne, to which the merely intelligent layman quite rightly devotes himself. Not far from our inn we crossed the Watling street, on its way to that other northern wall of turf, between the Forth and Clyde, which was to prove that the ambition of Imperial Rome had at last overleaped its powers. A little later we passed beside the site of Heavenfield, that mighty conflict between Oswald and the Celts, spoken of in an earlier chapter, when Oswald's army, as the story goes, became converts and conquerors on the same day. We turned aside, too, across country to the northward, to look at the massive isolated pele tower of Cocklaw, which still keeps grim guard over a homestead in a wide flat, and makes a brave show from the surrounding hills, and after this we were soon upon the banks of the North Tyne at Chollerford, six miles above Hexham and five above the confluence of the two lusty and formidable streams. They are, in truth, a powerful pair of twins. But this northern one holds the fancy more on all

accounts. It is a trifle larger for one thing, and as full in volume as the Welsh Dee or Usk in their maturity. It runs dark in a flood, with the rich flavour of a thousand peat mosses, while the other, though differing nothing in the nature of its birth or origin, comes down in storm-time of a muddier hue. The South Tyne may be said to form the third and the least of the great raiding valleys, but it opens no direct path to Scotland, as flowing from the west and rising on the edge of Cumberland. But the North Tyne, like the Rede, has its fountain springs on the Scottish side of the line, and these were the two main arteries down which the foray went and came. On the wild banks, too, of either, and up the burns that feed them, lived the wildest and most lawless of the Border clans or greynes. No other valleys on the English March—and the Rede is a tributary of the North Tyne—are so steeped in foraying and moss-trooping story for the whole of their respective courses, and that of the North Tyne is some thirty miles long.

No valley anywhere has a river more worthy to chaunt the refrain of such a stirring and romantic past. Dark, clean-bottomed, rapid, and full volumed; stirred at short notice into angry flood, channelled with rocks and pent betimes into narrow wooded gorges, it is altogether a river to be held in high regard. The Romans fashioned a statue, probably many statues, but one remains, after their conception of its deity, a powerful, bearded, truculent Vulcan-looking type of being. The salmon, when they come to the parting of the ways above Hexham, bright and beautiful a stream in fine weather though the South Tyne be, choose the nobler path in a majority of perhaps twenty to one. This was my first acquaintance with it, and we stood over the central one of the seven massive arches that carry the road across it at Chollerford, and watched the porter-coloured water running eight or ten feet deep beneath us, and just here some eighty yards in width, for it was a falling flood. Just below the bridge the river broke into a wide burst of rapids spreading around a woody island or two, and hurrying on to where the great



Roman station of Chesters or Cilurnum dips to the very flood mark of the stream. For to the east of the river, Wade's road swerved from the wall to meet the modern bridge. The old Roman bridge, fragments of which may yet be seen in the bed of the river, crossed it half a mile below and landed the traveller of those days at the very doors of the chief officer's sumptuous villa, which has now, with its rooms, its passages, and elaborate baths, been opened to the day. It was not on this occasion, however, that I made acquaintance with Chesters, for it is not a thing to be undertaken in the course of a fifteen or twenty-mile walk. It demands a day, at least, to itself, and even this will perchance only stimulate the visitor to return again.

It was at Chollerford, moreover, that Hobbie Noble cut the tree by which he rescued Jock o' the Side from Newcastle jail, and it was at Chollerford, on his return to Liddesdale from that immortal exploit, that he swam the swollen Tyne with his chained and fettered friend upon his back, while the baffled sheriff raged upon the hither shore. It is a pleasant walk from here to Hexham of some seven miles, five of them by leafy lanes lifted above the river which churns far below in deep rocky channels between well-timbered meadows and fringes of pendant woods. At Warden, near the confluence, there is a well-kept church with a plain tower partly of Saxon work, and it is worth while getting down to the river bank here, for its bed is broken everywhere with great boulders that lash its waters into a hundred moods. It is hemmed in, moreover, with fantastic walls and slabs of limestone, and thickly overhung with woods. Upon the whole, the last effort of this noble river is not surpassed for beauty on its whole course, and of this last I was privileged a little later to prosecute an acquaintance that only ceased amid the solitudes of the Scottish border, where, with a foot on each side, I dipped the cup of my flask into its infant streams.



NORTH TYNE BELOW CHESTERS



## CHAPTER X

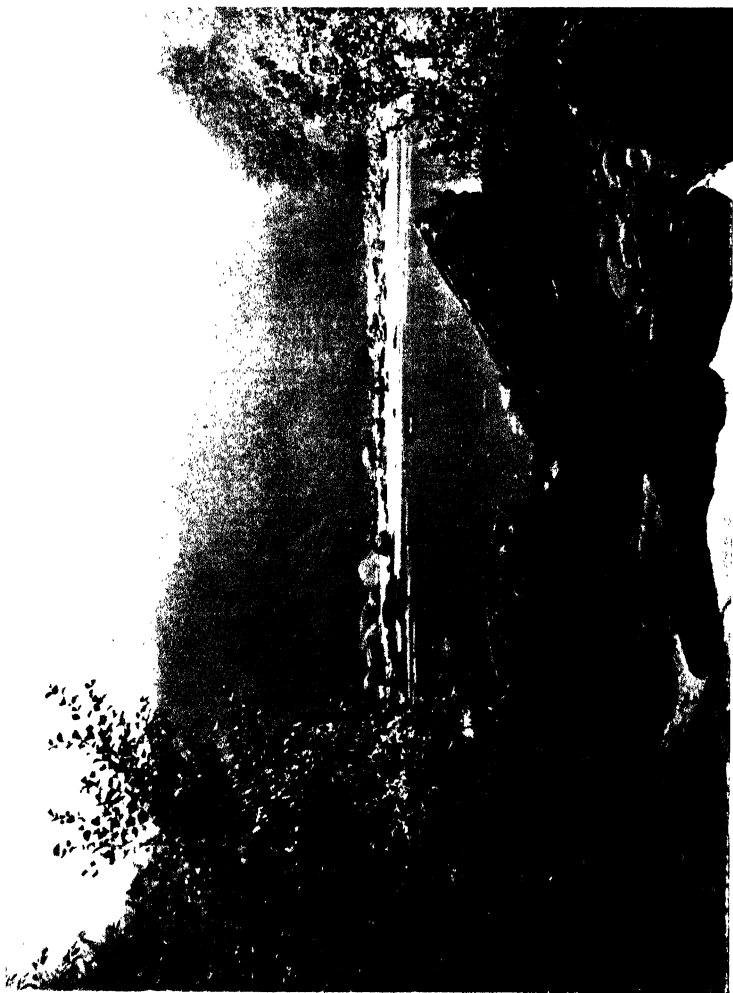
### THE ROMAN WALL

I CONFESS to approaching the subject of the Roman wall in these pages with no slight misgiving. When I think upon the sages who have spent much of their lives in constructing all that we may know of its story by patient excavation, by thought and labour, and left us such a legacy of illuminating matter, I feel that an apology is almost due from a light-hearted amateur proposing to tread in their steps and cull briefly from their ample store. I take some heart, however, in the thought that a mere infinitesimal fraction of even the more enlightened public outside the Border country have ever followed its mysterious trail, and that only a larger fraction have any dim conception of what it really amounts to. So one may venture to hope that the impression of a layman, whose eyes have been recently opened, may serve at least as an elementary introduction to what is, I think, fairly regarded as far and away the most impressive reminder of Roman Britain in these islands, and certainly the most fascinating scene of Roman occupation remaining in evidence. I have seen Bath and Ureiconium, Cardiff, Caerleon, and Pevensey, as well as various lesser remains of the Roman period, including that wonderful little Roman villa that has braved the centuries above ground on the coast of Cumberland, at Ravenglass. But I cannot think that the most successful excavation of a single station, however large, can touch the imagination with quite the same force as these toiling leagues of upstanding wall and its measured line of fortresses.

The impressive solitude of the region through which much of it pursues its undeviating path, the rugged precipitous and lonely heights whose crests it scales in its unswerving journey from sea to sea are, beyond doubt, partly responsible for the sway it wields over every one, with a head to think or a heart to feel, who has visited it.

Lying back on the crest of the lofty hill, along whose eastern and southern base the two Tynes run to their confluence, is a well-defined British camp. But I could not help feeling after climbing up there one cloudless morning and enjoying a prospect up the North and South Tyne into Scotland and Cumberland respectively, how vague and elusive were the thoughts aroused by the crude, grassy earthwork within whose circle I stood, compared to the eloquence of that other rampart but a few miles beyond ; yet it was more than possible they were practically of the same age. Environment after all has a good deal to say in these matters unless you have definitely committed yourself to the pursuit of primitive man, and, like an acquaintance of mine, keep a mind sedulously blank to every historic occurrence subsequent to the final lodgment of the Romans. As an amateur I had spent a recent summer in Wiltshire in constant company with the prehistoric Briton, and found his society highly stimulating. But there he is in sole and conspicuous occupation of the soil, and has no shadow of a rival. In Wales, also, he is very much alive. In Northumberland, too, his traces are thick enough, and give the serious antiquary an ample field for such leisure as the insistent Roman may leave him. But somehow he does not touch me here as elsewhere. The intrenched camp, the trackway, the round hut, the tumulus, the monolith, seem to pale in interest before the infinitely more eloquent remains in this wild corner of the masters of the world who could have told us all about these other primitive things and their import in polished prose, if they had thought them worth their notice.

I may be less than just to my compatriots in assuming so large a measure of vagueness concerning the wall. One may



NORTH LANE AT WARDEN



only judge, of course, within the limits of one's experience. For myself I had in past times been more than once so nearly within its atmosphere, and to my shame stopped just short of it, as to gather something of its significance and to feel for years an uneasy restlessness at any mention of it, and a sense of lost opportunities unsustained by any definite prospect of recovering them. As to what extent the wall may be an object of pilgrimage, I can only say that some half a dozen days scattered through the month of August, the saturnalia of the tourist, found us on or about that notable six or eight mile section, to which the visitor naturally and for the best of reasons resorts, and we met in all just eight persons.

The station of Chesters, or Cilurnum, which we have just passed at Chollerford upon the North Tyne, may be accounted with sufficient accuracy the eastern limit of the western, or more perfect and altogether more inspiring, half of the Northumbrian wall. You may, if you choose, go thither from Hexham by the North British Railway, which threads the windings of the North Tyne and eventually climbs its distant watershed into Scotland with a single line. About four times a day the locomotive startles the shades of the raiders, and gladdens no doubt the ears of their descendants with its brief commotion. Chollerford station is about ten minutes' walk from the camp of Chesters, which lies in the park of a country house owned by the Clayton family. The late Mr. Clayton was an accomplished and ardent antiquary. The excavations here are mainly due to his initiative and supervision, and, what is more, he erected a large museum at his lodge gate, wherein a very fine collection of Roman treasures from all the stations on or about the wall is carefully arranged and tabulated. Lastly, both camp and museum are thrown open to the public one day in the week. If the fastnesses of the wall itself and its elevated western stations are apparently so little heeded by an incurious public, Mr. Clayton's laudable work by the river-side at Chesters seems, at any rate, fully appreciated. An average perhaps of fifty persons may assemble here every



Thursday ; pilgrims mainly from the outer world, an intelligent and interested company as I saw them for the most part. But Chesters can be seen without any trouble or without missing a single square meal. The other stations and the wall itself demand a good deal of exertion, and admit only of such food and drink as you can carry in your pocket. Regarded simply as a camp, however, Chesters is technically the most interesting, as it is the largest and most elaborately excavated, while the museum is in itself an incalculable attraction.

It seems inevitable, when face to face with such a hazy period, that something should be said of the main events which led to the building of what is usually known as Hadrian's Wall. Julius Cæsar, it will be remembered, only paid a flying visit of about three weeks to Britain, some half a century previous to the Christian era. Then came a long silence, broken only by the casual allusion of contemporary Latin authors to our island as inhospitable, barbarous, and unconquered. Nearly a hundred years after Cæsar's brief and rather rough experience, and forty-three after Christ, the Emperor Claudius, not, it is said, without native encouragement, determined to win name and fame in the Ultima Thule of the West. So in A.D. 43 Aulus Plautius, his lieutenant, landed in South Britain with the first instalment of the conquering host, some fifty thousand men, who had raised, however, among themselves many objections to serving in a country "outside the world." Next year the emperor had to come himself, and, pushing his conquests as far as Colchester, received in Rome the coveted Triumph and the surname of Britannicus. Aulus Plautius continued the work with the future Emperor Vespasian as second in command, and after much hard fighting, brought the south of the island into subjection. He was succeeded by Ostorius Scapula, a name familiar enough to those who have followed the camp-strewn track of the brave Silurians under Caractacus along the Marches of South Wales. In the ensuing reign of Nero came the great revolt in south-east Britain under Boadicea, when

London and St. Albans were sacked amid tremendous slaughter. Suetonius was the governor to whom fell the ruthless task of retribution, which was achieved in the death, we are told, of eighty thousand Britons. The conquered south lay apparently stunned, and the conquerors being doubtless out of breath, it was reserved for Vespasian, thirty years after the first settlement, to commence fresh operations. His lieutenants in five years subdued the Brigantes in the north, and succeeded better, at least, than Ostorius against the heroic Silurians. Then arose the most vigorous and successful soldier of them all, Agricola, who had already the experience of many years' service in the island. Tacitus, his son-in-law, relates his triumphs in war, his statesmanlike and conciliatory methods in peace. His first autumn he subdued the North Welsh and the sacred isle of Mona. The second year he cemented the conquests already made by stations and garrisons, at the same time educating the chieftains in polite usages and teaching the natives generally the art of war, of erecting buildings, and, what is more, of how to live in them. In short, he sowed the seeds of a liking for inactivity, luxury, and ease, which was to save the conquerors many battles. Next year Agricola carried his arms to the Tay and secured the country behind by a chain of forts from the Firth to the Clyde. When in seven years he had done with Britain he was fighting only around the edge of what we now call the Scottish Highlands, the rest of the island being terrorized into peace.

His successors during the next thirty odd years lost headway so much, and experienced so many revolts, that the Emperor Hadrian came in person to the island. Though his operations were successful it was Hadrian who, at least, inaugurated the policy that the chain of forts which Agricola had, it is supposed, placed also across this lower neck, as well as across the shorter isthmus between Forth and Clyde, should be the limit of Roman dominion. It was Hadrian who till recently has been generally regarded as the builder, about A.D. 121, of the wall that we see here now, and that, together

with its stations, remained, speaking broadly, the northern frontier of Roman Britain and of the Roman Empire for three hundred years. And now I am at the perilous edge of a net work of controversy that ribald individuals, devoid of the bump of reverence, or any obligations towards accuracy, would tell you has made breaches in families and alienated from one another ancient friends. This is what the Border Philistine in his lighter moments will freely assert. These are not as the controversies of the neolithic and eolithic enthusiast, so obviously indefinite as almost to preclude any ground for serious tension. Heaven forbid that I should hint at anything of this kind, embittering those haunts of ancient peace where Northumbrian antiquaries foregather. It would be both impertinent and libellous to echo the jests of the grouse-shooting, or fox-hunting, or coal-mining, or sheep-breeding Philistine, which are licensed. As I have said, this is not like a pre-historic controversy ; there is ample documentary testimony in Roman and early British writers as to the building of the wall, but it all just stops short at the actual builder of the stone one now extant, and leaves two great men, Hadrian and Severus, with nearly a century between them, as mute but rival claimants. It would be preposterous in these pages to involve the reader in even a summary of the evidence produced in favour of either of these theories, or to quote the extracts from a dozen Roman writers, besides the allusions to the wall by the British historians, Nennius, Gildas, and Bede, interesting as it all is to those who are concerned with the subject, and well worthy of perusal. Such controversies affect no wit, but only give further interest to the great main facts, namely, that the wall before us was built not later than the early part of the third century, and, at least, two hundred years before the departure of the Romans, and that the stations are mostly, if not all, a century older. A word or two may be permitted as to the main difficulties of more positive definition. Every one agrees that two walls were built, the other one connecting the Forth and Clyde with a length of sixty-three miles. The Latin authors, with one or two

exceptions, give no clue as to which they are alluding to. The northern wall, the stations upon which are identified and have produced a good deal to the excavator, is known to have been built of sods, not only from its contemporary description as a "vallum," a term opposed to the idea of masonry, but still more from the traces left by it. The term "muris" is held to mean in all cases a stone wall. It is usually applied, but not always, to the Northumbrian wall. The question is a burning one, whether Hadrian did not build his wall of sods, clamped together, as we are told, these turf walls were with huge stakes, to be replaced in the next century by Severus with the stone wall we now see. If I record here the fact that *Ælius Spartianus*, the historian of the Emperor Hadrian, distinctly states that the latter "was the first to draw a muris of eighty thousand paces to divide the Barbarians from the Romans," the reader might assume that this settles the question, and demand to what purpose all this palaver. But he would be wrong, and if he followed the further evidence of the experts, some of whom, I think, would almost give some years of life to be quite sure of the same, he would find them holding poor *Ælius* in less esteem than they would like to. He would find them confronted with the fact that "muris" is used, though perhaps in mere carelessness, by an almost contemporary historian in regard to the northern wall, which we know was sod. This last we may dispose of with the statement that it is credited to *Lollius Urbicus*, chief in command of the Emperor Antoninus Pius about the year 140 A.D., also that it proved, as every one vaguely knows, a failure, though precisely how much of a failure even the wisest do not know.

In regard, however, to this living wall, the question may be thus briefly summarized. In 1840 Severus was universally credited with it by antiquaries. In the same year Mr. Hodgson, the eminent historian of Northumberland, published the fact and the reason for it, that he had slowly come to the conclusion that the Wall, with its turrets and many of the stations on it, were planned and executed by Hadrian.

Mr. Bruce, the most eminent and voluminous of past authorities on the wall, together with Mr. John Clayton, agreed with Mr. Hodgson, and the Hadrian theory held the field, and practically renamed the wall, which had been called after Severus since earlier times, when it had been known as the Kepe or Picts' Wall.

Now, however, though a stimulating and healthy partisanship exists on this and minor matters, there is a prevalent disposition to regard the question with an open mind. One word more, if the reader will bear with me, anent a salient feature that has been the cause, and doubtless always will be, of endless controversy and much mystery. This is the Vallum, which I spoke of in the last chapter, as clinging to the course of the wall, and scarcely ever more than a bow-shot distant from it throughout its whole length. The technical peculiarities of its construction, which are a subject of some perplexity, do not matter for the moment. To the ordinary eye, it resembles one of those dykes or depressions with a bank on either side—double on one side in this case—that one associates with ancient British work. Some think it was a part of the scheme that planned the wall and the later camps, and was intended as a defence against an attack from the south by the subjected tribes. Others agree with the first part of the theory, but regard the Vallum as having, in the first instance, at any rate, been constructed simply as a road from camp to camp. The theory that it preceded the stone wall as a barrier against the North is untenable, seeing that for much of the way it lies on a southern slope, and is commanded from above. Some believe it to be merely an ancient boundary line, such as the Wansdyke in Wiltshire, elaborated and utilized for the purpose of transport or defence, possibly both, by the Romans. At any rate, it has earned the epithet of the inscrutable, and is a continual source of entertainment to the archæologist.

Now, there is an important Roman document extant known as the "*Notitia Dignitatum*," to all intents and purposes an imperial army and civil list. In this are set forth,



ON THE ROMAN WALL



under the heading "along the Vallum," not only the list of all stations on the wall, but the *personelle* of their respective garrisons, which last appear to have been more or less permanent. This list is further corroborated, if such were necessary, by the numerous tablets and altars found in each station, with the name of the corps quartered there. Chesters, or Cilurnum, for instance, as guarding the bridge over the river and being convenient for watering horses, was a cavalry station and the quarters of the second ala of the Astures. It appears as the sixth station from the east in the Notitia, and is thus entered "*Profectus Alæ Secundæ Asturum Cilurno*," while Hunnum was also held by a cavalry garrison, and in like manner tabulated "The Prefect of the Savinian Ala at Hunnum." Six of the twenty-three stations were occupied by cavalry, and an ala consisted of five hundred men. Such natural shelter as could be looked for upon the wall from the fierce blasts of the north certainly existed at Chesters, a small mercy for which these troopers from Southern Spain were, let us hope, duly thankful.

Chesters is the second largest station on the wall, Birdoswald, in Cumberland, ranking first. It is of oblong shape, and five acres in extent, and pushes its north end some seventy yards past the line of the wall. Much excavation has been done here. Mr. Clayton began it about 1840, and the veteran who now shows one round was practically engaged in this work under his master only twenty years later, and with his own hands has helped to recover or expose the greater part of what one now sees.

The station had six gates, one of which still retains on excavation the usual rectangular towers and guardroom on either side. Here there is a pillar in the middle, on each side of which were double gates, closing in the middle against a stone curb and turning on an iron pivot that worked in a stone cup. In these stations, or small military towns, the forum and market seems to have been combined in one central enclosure. This has been laid open at Chesters, exposing three gateways, with the marks of wheels on the



stone sill of the easterly one, showing that market produce was brought hither in carts. The bases of the pillars, which carried a colonnade round three sides of an open court, are still *in situ*, and three large rooms have been exposed, which are thought to have been used for official purposes. My accomplished, and now venerable, guide discovered the well himself about fifteen years ago. The Prætorium, the quarters of the station commander, was exposed by Mr. Clayton in 1843, with a flight of steps leading into various apartments, in one of which he found the red cement still lining a bath, and in the flues of the furnaces, the soot was as fresh as if produced by fires lighted the day before. In these chambers he found a bronze fibula, now in the museum, and among other things, including coins from Hadrian to Gratian's time, a signet ring, displaying a cock pecking at an ear of wheat. Here, too, was found the statue of the river god already alluded to.

Other interesting portions are the barracks and part of a street, with several small chambers opening out of it, and the bases of columns that supported a colonnade, showing them to have been shops. The foundations of the south gateway have also been laid bare, and are much as the other one, and, indeed, as most of them on these stations, having two entrances separated, in this case by a wall, with an archway through it. Here the remains of one of the wooden gateposts were actually found adhering to the iron pin, which was fast in the stone pivots. In one of the guard-houses of this gate was a stone inscribed "The Sixth Legion the Victorious" (Leg. VI. V. I.). In all the world could there be any elaborate inscription more moving in its significant brevity than those seven letters emerging from the sod upon the banks of the Tyne, and choked with this remote Northumbrian soil! Among the treasures gathered from Cilurnum, nothing is rated higher than two portions of a bronze tablet which were found among the *débris* of the guardroom to the south gate by Mr. Tailford, our guide. These are now in the British Museum, and belong to a class of tablet found elsewhere in

Britain, and known as military diplomas. They seem to have been issued by Vespasian and Hadrian, and are, in short, certificates of good conduct to discharged soldiers, carrying the rights of Roman citizenship and the right to marry. This one contains twenty lines of lettering. It begins with the name and titles of the Emperor, Cæsar Titus Ætius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, the father of his country, and goes on to say that the cavalry soldiers in three *alæ* and eleven cohorts, who had completed twenty-five campaigns and obtained an honourable discharge, shall have the rights of Roman citizenship and also of marriage with the wives whom they have when citizenship is granted them, and in cases of unmarried men, with such wives as they may hereafter take, provided that each man takes one wife only. A list of the three *alæ* and eleven cohorts is also written upon the tablet. The only fragment missing contains the date, which is readily fixed by the allusions to Antoninus Pius at 146 A.D.

On the water side of the station, which stands some fifty feet above the river, is perhaps the most interesting of all the excavated buildings to the ordinary eye, and thought to have been the private residence of the commanding officer. This displays a courtyard thirty-five feet by thirty feet, faced by a wall containing seven alcoves within rounded arches, some three feet high, and in perfect preservation. They are thought to have been connected with the bath, of which there are obvious remains, as well as portions of the pipes and cisterns for retaining water and carrying it to and from the river, a hundred yards away. Some of the hypocausts are extant, while adjacent to the courtyard are four or five chambers. Beneath a curious splayed window in one of them, Dr. Bruce found some fragments of broken glass. In clearing out another, thirty-three human skeletons, with those of two horses and a dog, were found, probably the relics of some successful inrush of the Barbarians, for we know that the wall with its stations was overleaped by the northern hordes many times in the three centuries of its existence.

Dr. Bruce, writing more than half a century ago, also believes that he discovered among the peasantry oral traditions of the Roman occupation. One catches one's breath for a moment at this. But, after all, the traces of a still remoter paganism, such as the midsummer fires, flourished within the memory of living people in many districts. When a particular staircase was opened at Cilurnum in 1843, the country people, says Dr. Bruce, were persuaded that a large underground stable holding five hundred horses would be revealed. It is at least significant that five hundred was the exact complement of an ala. He quotes some other local superstitions along the wall, which may or may not be regarded as absurd. The Romans, for instance, were supposed to have been abnormally lazy in time of security, and accustomed to bask in a state of torpor under the southern side of the wall, and the Picts, it was affirmed, used to creep up unawares, and letting down grappling hooks, haul these unsuspecting warriors over the wall by their clothes. A tradition survived, also, that the Romans had extravagantly broad feet and wore still broader shoes, and that when it rained they lay on their backs with their feet in the air, finding in this fantastic method a serviceable protection from the weather. Another is that the stones for building the wall were conveyed from the quarry by a long line of men passing them from hand to hand. I found a similar tradition still alive, and probably a sound one, even among the school-children, regarding the Norman castle of Clun on the Welsh march, the particular quarry there being two miles distant. Another wall tradition is that a flue ran along inside the masonry, and was used as a speaking trumpet from post to post. In Dr. Bruce's day, too, there was a local legend that the Picts once drove the Romans from the wall and stations, and that the latter, while marching seaward, with the intention of leaving the country, met a seer, who pronounced the gloomy alternative for them of being drowned if they took ship, or slain if they retraced their steps. Thus embarrassed they marched for Wales, where the Roman breed, pure and unadulterated, was to be found to this day. Dr.

Bruce wonders if this could be in any way traced to the march of the XXth Legion from the wall to Caerleon. No, indeed! This in my humble opinion is worth all the other traditions put together. For in the fifth century, the period of the official severance from Rome, when the Romanized Britons were trying to hold the wall, the sons of Cunedda, a chieftain of Strathclyde, were among those responsible for its defence. Every Welshman knows how at length, giving up the struggle against the Pictish and Scottish hordes, still further intensified by the commencement of the Saxon pressure from the east, the family of Cunedda headed a great immigration from the north and south of the wall, upon the western side, and marched to Wales. Here they possessed themselves of, or, at any rate, secured predominance over, a large slice of the country. They were, in a sense, the founders of the old social system, and the begetters of much of the ancient aristocracy of Wales, who were in turn, and in part only, displaced by the Normans. Merioneth, Cardigan, and other districts owe their name to the various sons of Cunedda. Theoretically the old land-owning families of much of Wales to-day are regarded as the representatives of the conquering cast introduced by the sons and followers of the old chief who reigned at Carlisle, on the western end of the wall.

Dr. Bruce evidently did not concern himself with the tangled maze of Welsh history, or know anything of the Cunedda movement. The tradition gathered by him becomes therefore all the more significant and valuable, in that it did not jump to any part of the great subject he has made his own, or offer any temptation to him to meet it, so to speak, halfway.

I have spoken of the Roman bridge across the North Tyne at Chesters, the remains of which are plain enough in the normal summer condition of the river. This bridge, which was built by Severus, took the place of an earlier one that is thought to have ante-dated the wall. Indeed, the remains of both are there, the distinction between them

being, I believe, quite unmistakable to those who have probed the matter.

The museum at Chesters, interesting enough in any case, is yet more so after making acquaintance with the wall itself and the site of its chief stations. Here you have contemporary portraits in stone of the kind of men who held the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire, the crested helmet, the tunic, the sword and belt, the spear and embossed shield. You find, too, their diverse, somewhat unexacting deities commemorated on every side. Here, for instance, five feet in height, is the headless figure of Cybele, daughter of the earth and sky, and mother of the gods, standing on a prostrate bull, the emblem of agriculture. Altars to Jove, "greatest and best," are, of course, numerous. Others are dedicated by Spanish horsemen, Batavian or German foot-soldiers or commanders to gods that have no place, I am quite sure, in any classical dictionary. Many of these altars, too, as well as tablets, are simply inscribed, "To the old gods;" whether this suggests some reaction against the many obscurer and local deities that the dedicators had tried and found wanting in North Britain, one may not know. From the next station of Procolitia come yet more altars and bronze tablets, not merely inscribed to the goddess Coventina, but in two instances carrying a figure of that lady herself in bold relief. The prefect of the first cohort of the Batavians himself is responsible, about the year A.D. 150, for one such to the popular, local goddess nymph, who reclines on a water-lily, holding a vessel in her left hand and a plant in her right. Here, again, the local god of the camp of Borcovicus, where we shall shortly be, Silvanus Coelius is invoked by Valerius, a Tungrian soldier. The XXth Legion, with its motto, *Valeria victrix*, and its crest, the running boar, is constantly in evidence on tablets and altars. The completion of public works, too, is commemorated in the same imperishable fashion, with the name of the regiment employed, and that of its commander, and sometimes that of the reigning emperors. The VIth Legion *Victrix, pia fideles*, was engaged in the construction

of the wall, and there is a stone here inscribed with the number of paces accomplished by a centuria of its ninth cohort. Here, again, is a tablet to a standard-bearer, whose figure is sculptured on it in high relief. The standard, shod with a triple prong and surmounted by a bull, is grasped in his right hand, while close by is a sepulchral stone to Longinus, the trumpeter of the first cohort of the Batavians. Near these, again, is one to a lady, Amelia Comindus, age thirty-three, dedicated to her memory by her husband, Nobilianus, who was quartered at Procolitia. This seems to have been used badly by the officers of a much later garrison, for it was found doing duty as the paving slab of a hypocaust, laid face downwards on pillars in a villa outside Procolitia, and its surface blackened with smoke. Mars Thingsus seems to have been a popular god of the German cohort at Borcovicus, and there are many portraits of him and many votive altars and tablets in his honour. There are numbers, too, of centurial tablets, with the names of the respective captains, one of which bears the familiar and wholly appropriate one of "Balbus." Tablets erected by wives to their husbands are, of course, as common as the reverse in all Roman camps, and in one, Cornelius Victor, a standard-bearer of infantry, with twenty-six years' service and fifty-five years eleven days of life, is thus honoured by his widow. The reigning emperors, one need hardly say, are commemorated on all sides. A common form of dedication, too, is that to the "genius of the camp," or the "cohort," and there is here an altar "to the genius of the faithful first cohort of the Vardulli," which appears to have been, according to the inscription, an exceptionally crack cavalry corps a thousand strong, consisting entirely of Roman citizens under the command of Antitus Adventus, the Imperial envoy and *proprætor*.

There are several milestones, and what a fine conception the Roman had of their dignity! Compare the curt lettering of a county council milestone, particularly in this very district of Northumberland, where the first three letters of a

place-name, quite enigmatical to the stranger, are sometimes considered sufficient, with the following expanded, as archæologists have it, "Imperatorī Cæsari Marcoavrello Severo Alexandro Pio felici Augusto Pontefici Maxim Tribunitæ potestates Consuli patri patriæ curante Claudio Xenophon Te legato Augusti Pro-Prætoꝛe a Petrianis Millia passuum XVIII"—and this I select at haphazard.

As to the large collection of milestones, gold, jet, and bronze ornaments, rings, fibulæ, brooches, statuettes, coins, Samianware, terra-cotta, and glass vessels, iron implements, bits, stirrups, weapons, and other things innumerable, such may be seen in duplicate in greater profusion, of course, and in spots more accessible and more frequented than on these remote banks of the North Tyne, whose undisturbed pastures gave them up to us. But to me, at least, on this quiet, far-away frontier of Imperial Rome they seem far more eloquent of their mysterious epoch than when stored amid the smoke of cities and the roar of traffic.

But we have not yet touched the wall itself, in its still extant section, that is to say. For any one with only a reasonable measure of antiquarian fire within him, a three or four days' walk along its entire length from Newcastle to Carlisle would be a profitable and pleasant enterprise. But as there are all sorts of other things and other districts to gossip about in these pages, I would take the reader at once to what, from every point of view, is the most complete and inspiring portion of it. This will be reached from Chollerford, by pursuing Wade's upland road, westward, through a country growing gradually wilder, to the neighbourhood of Sewingshields, a high, craggy summit over which the wall, already a very obvious fact, boldly strides. Halfway here we shall have left behind us close to the road the station of Crawburgh or Procolota, and crossed the burn so sacred to the Dutch soldiers' water goddess Coventina, its presiding genius. Here, too, the road at length ceases its prolonged and vandal dance upon the traces of the wall, for the latter now leaps away towards that adventurous rugged journey of

a dozen miles, where no modern road dare follow it, leaving that of General Wade to pursue a parallel course in the bleak vale below. Nothing could be more striking or clearly defined, or, indeed, more finely exhibited to the eye from any high point of the ridge it traverses than this passage of the Roman wall through the wilderness. From this high crag of Sewingshields, as good a point as any to take up with it, the whole lie of the country on either side can be read like a map. Parallel with the outstanding line of the wall, and some four miles to the southward, is the valley of the South Tyne, and between us the back of the high ridge beyond which it flows. It is, in fact, the next one to that carrying the wall and on which we are standing. It has left such scanty traces of luxuriance as it possesses on its southern slope to look down on the river villages of Haydon Bridge, Bardon Mill, and Haltwhistle. On this north side it is sometimes heathery moorland, but mostly bleak pasture, laced with stone walls and bank fences, and thinly sprinkled with grim little homesteads of stone planted on or near Wade's road, which again waves forward like a ribbon along the treeless vale between. Still lightly fenced, but as it rises to the wall shaking off for the most part all trammels of turf or stone dyke ; this second ridge from the Tyne, that for centuries was the outer rampart of Imperial Rome, suddenly breaks and falls abruptly into the plain below over precipitous whinstone cliffs. Along the brink of these escarpments, which rise and fall for miles between altitudes of eight and thirteen hundred feet, you can see, from the one on which we are now standing, the dark thick line of the renowned Murus urging forward its unswerving course. The spectacle, too, is the more impressive from the solitudes that spread beneath it to the northward, for here is no compromise whatever with civilization. As far as the eye can see, and that is just so far as the state of the atmosphere will permit, stretches an undulating solitude, as profound in every essential as when the shivering sentinels of the Roman watch-towers scanned it for the irrepressible barbarian, and this far-extended garrison had probably little rest. Intimidation was



not enough for the hardy Picts of the north ; they had to be constantly encountered, and there is plenty of evidence from Tacitus and other writers that they broke over the wall, overwhelmed the camps and garrisons, and ravaged the country of the Romanized Britons behind on several occasions, at points, at any rate, if not simultaneously along the whole frontier. That so many soldiers served twenty-five campaigns here seems of itself sufficient testimony to the Pictish spirit. We are told, too, that for such punishment as the latter received in summer they made up for in winter by the annoyance they caused. How the Spaniards and Italians relished watching and fighting on this very storm centre of the inclement north, one may well wonder. No doubt in time they got acclimatized. Indeed, they had to, as they probably spent most of their lives here.

If there were no wall and no Romans, this wonderful whinstone ridge would alone be a feature worth coming to see. It might well seem as if one of the natural ridges of these uplands had been split in the centre and sheared off with some blunt-edged instrument, which shaved it down for stretches of a mile or so and then left it alone to dip to the wilderness in the normal way. I am not going to follow here piece by piece the structural details and present conditions of the wall westward along the summit of these bare, green crests and frowning cliffs. It will be enough that it is now for some miles continuously extant, and generally about six feet high, with a breadth of but little less. For much of the time its summit affords the easiest, as it certainly does the most interesting footway, unless there be a boisterous wind or heavy rain showers. We were favoured with both on two of the four or five days I was privileged to spend on the wall, and I would not have had it otherwise. For striking as is the range of vision hence on a clear, sunny day, with the Cheviots in the far north and Skiddaw and Crossfell just showing dim beyond the heaped-up moors to the south, whence issues the other Tyne, with the Solway, again gleaming far away towards the Irish Sea, the genius of the place

seems to me far more responsive to gloom and clouds, to wind and storm. On each occasion that I followed the trail it was in the best of company, native born, and bred up in a proper regard for it, and none of us had any difference upon this point whatever, so we took our soakings—for you don't get merely damp on the wall—if not with thankfulness, at least without complaint.

The work itself is faced with square blocks, mostly free-stone, and composed within of rubble and whinstone, into which was poured that liquid mortar which has made Roman work so durable. One or two seventeenth-century writers who saw the wall speak of it as twenty feet high. Expert opinion, based on many existing sources for forming one, practically agree in confirming the estimate of these Elizabethan eye-witnesses. Not time, but man, alas! has been mainly active in destroying what would have been a monument indeed. Every farmhouse, every barn and cottage within reach of the wall has arisen out of its ruin, and it is only in quite recent times that the ravage has been checked. Mr. Clayton, I believe, bought every bit of land containing portions of the work that was purchasable, and thus laid posterity under still further obligations.

The Roman plan for its defence was a large station, of which we took Chesters as a leading type, about every fourth mile. Between these, at intervals of a Roman mile (seven furlongs), was a castella about sixty feet square, built against the south side of the wall, with a gate opening inwards, and the remains of several of these are happily extant. Between these "mile-castles," again, were stone towers, mere sentry-boxes for one or two soldiers, of which, I believe, there are scarcely any traces. A mile or so west of Sewingshields the line of the barrier dips to a spot of somewhat sinister fame, and known as Busy Gap. It was a pass into Hexhamshire from the boundless mosses below, which stretched away to the rieving districts of the North Tyne and Rede, and was much used by the moss-troopers and cattle thieves. In the desolate moors below is the site of an old Border castle,

inhabited less than a century ago, and celebrated in a stanza by Scot. This pass had such evil notoriety that the term "Busy Gap rogue" was held as libellous at law in Newcastle. When Camden came to see the wall from Carlisle, with Sir Robert Cotton, though they were consumed with curiosity they dare not advance further than Carvoran, in Cumberland. "From thence it goeth forward to Busy Gap, a place infamous for thieving and robbery, but I could not with safety take the full survey of it for the rank robbers there about."

The station of Housteads, or Borcovicus, covers a green-hill top, 750 feet above sea-level, on whose southern slope a small farmhouse amid a grove of trees strikes a cheerful note amid most austere surroundings. Housteads is only three miles from Bardon Mill, the second railway station west of Hexham, on the Carlisle line, and it is a pleasant walk up there from the valley of the South Tyne, crossing in the course of it a bold ridge, purple at this time with heather bloom. Borcovicus, as we have already seen, has been prolific in its contributions to our knowledge, such as it is, of Roman life on the wall, and was occupied, it may be remembered, by a cohort of Tungrian Infantry, a thousand strong, German settlers originally in Belgian Gaul. We have no right to assume, however, that nostalgia prevailed among these aliens, or that they greatly sighed for the banks of the Meuse, though they must often have sighed for the summer. Here, at any rate, they doubtless spent most of their lives, formed alliances more or less regular with the native women of the communities which clustered thickly along the south side of the barrier, and supplied, or helped to supply, the needs of a garrison of some fifteen thousand men. What is now one of the most thinly populated regions in all England was then, beyond doubt, one of the most populous and active, for a hundred thousand souls at least must have dwelt continuously along this sixty-mile belt. Nowhere else after the time of Hadrian were the Roman arms in Britain seriously engaged, nor was there any other frontier. The natives elsewhere had accepted the situation, and gradually dropped into



PRÆTORIUM FOROVICUS (HOUSE LEAD)



a peaceful life undisturbed by political or military aspirations. But north of the wall we know with tolerable certainty that the barbarian neither slumbered nor slept. His sword did not rust, neither did his muscles relax, as the civilized Briton of the south discovered to his cost when he was left alone to man these northern ramparts and face him. Here, at any rate, for three centuries there was life and stir and watchfulness, fame to be won, promotion to be earned. One must not think of this busy frontier as remote from Imperial notice because it was geographically remote from Rome, and has now shrivelled into a few scanty ruins amid a lonely waste. The safety of a great and wealthy province then hung upon it, and one is apt to forget that eight or ten Roman emperors spent a considerable time in Britain; that one was born, and that two died here.

Ships from France or the Mediterranean must have been continually unloading freights at one or both ends of this frontier: edibles and luxuries and works of art from the far south. Men, too, must have been continually going back and forth; officers on leave, disbanded soldiers, or recruits, British youths embarking for the foreign legions, or captured Picts shipped as slaves. The security of the wall, though violated on occasions during three centuries, must have seemed quite sufficient for the average Briton of that day; and, no doubt, agriculture under the stimulus of the Roman eye, and of a market into which specie from abroad was regularly poured, flourished no little. Disbanded soldiers of all nations must have settled down here, too, by hundreds, with British wives. And what has become, I should like to know, of this prodigious infusion of southern blood into North Britain? The Tungrians and Batavians may well have introduced an earlier Teutonic strain into the Celts, who fought afterwards so stoutly against Ida and other Saxon intruders. For that matter, the Picts themselves are suspected of Teutonic blood, though the Scots, we all know, were Celts from Ireland. But how about the Spaniards, and the Moors, who for two centuries at any rate, and probably

three, were represented on an average by perhaps two thousand males. Whatever happened, they must have shared the fate of the Celt with whom they merged and become, roughly speaking, Britons of Strathclyde. In this case, their descendants must have marched to Wales with the sons of Cunedda. Through his Strathclyde ancestors, then, the modern Welshman might quite often find his origin in a Tungrian trooper or a Moorish standard-bearer!

Borcovicus covers five acres, and is on the usual rectangular plan with its northern front abutting on the wall. The drop from the latter into the waste below, known as the forest of Lowes, is just here sufficiently steep, but a hundred yards further westward develops into a sheer precipice of basaltic crag two hundred feet in height. From the east and south gates of the station, too, the ground slopes downwards, but more gently, terraced and broken for a long distance where the suburbs of the town, the offices, villas, and other detached buildings once stood. Within its four walls, the camp has been at various periods during the last century very thoroughly excavated. These same walls, which are five feet thick, as well as all four gateways, are entirely exposed. The latter have the usual towers containing guard chambers on either side, and are divided in the middle as elsewhere, forming two entrances, each of which was furnished with a double door closing on a central kerb stone. Their narrowness strikes one at once as indicating the small gauge of the Roman carts and chariots. The grooves in the sills, made by the countless wheels that passed over them, strike one too, but on a deeper and other chord. There is no custodian or guide up here. Borcovicus is quite in the wilds, protected only against the beasts of the field, while the long grass, matting as it does knee-deep between the crumbled walls and streets, entailed an unavoidable and complete soaking on each of our visits. But in those long ages before modern builders made their onslaught upon such rare quarries of dressed stone, many a wild beast, many a moss-trooper must have sought refuge in these uncanny, roofless towns upon the waste.

I am not going round Borcovicus as a guide. It will be enough to say that two streets bisect the station, crossing each other near the remains of the Forum; that the foundations of two large halls are exposed, one of them no less than a hundred and fifty feet in length, with the fragments of circular pillars still resting *in situ* on square bases. There are the remains, too, of a bath and hypocaust, and great numbers of smaller chambers constituting the soldiers' barracks. Experts say that there are distinct traces of the station having been captured and occupied for a time by the barbarians, and then reoccupied by the Romans, who restored the damage without clearing away the inferior patching of the Pict. One entry of the two, common to all the gates on this station, as in others, has been walled up. This is attributed to the period of waning garrisons and the decline of confidence preceding the withdrawal. Numbers of altars and tablets have been recovered here, giving evidence among other things that Mithras, the sungod of the Persians, whose worship the Romans had adopted shortly before the Christian era, must have been a popular deity, perhaps because he showed his face so seldom. For at a point some three hundred yards south of the camp, and within the traces of its suburbs, a walled-in chamber about twelve feet square dedicated to this god, who demanded the rites of human sacrifice, was discovered in 1822. Two upright altars, inscribed with a dedication to Mithras, and a large tablet illustrating the deity himself, surrounded by the signs of the Zodiac, were found standing in a row within, and several fragments of dedicatory tablets were discovered in the same chamber. Another god in higher favour with this Tungrian cohort, as before mentioned, was Mars Thingsus. Several altars in his honour are in the Chesters Museum as well as the archway of a temple, in the corner of which he figures in helmet and tunic and short sword, grasping a standard and supported by a goose. A nude female holding a wreath is carved on either side or curve of the same arch. Traces, too, of an amphitheatre may be seen just below this camp,



and the captive Pict must have made an admirable gladiator. The craving to know something of the life of these garrisons becomes intense as one stands amid their traces at once so confidential and so hopelessly aloof; above all, the manner in which the Roman officers, the prefects, and centurions, their wives and families filled in their time. Were the ladies, who put up memorial tablets to their husbands, and whose virtues are extolled by sorrowing widowers and sons, also women of the world? It is quite certain they demanded many of the luxuries belonging to a ruling class. But of what like was garrison society, with all the traditions of a southern clime, in this windswept mountain ridge? No doubt they hunted in such a country, and we know that British sporting dogs were quite an item of export. They must assuredly, too, have interchanged visits with the neighbouring stations, along the excellent military road, the traces of which can yet be seen, that followed the wall, while the temptation to gossip and scandal must have been irresistible. Perhaps they did a little lead mining in the valley of the Tyne close by. The officers, however, must have had a fair amount of routine work, drilling recruits, getting supplies through, and administering justice, not only to their garrisons, but to the neighbouring farmers and peasants who were under their jurisdiction. They had their regimental doctors too, for a mural tablet to the "Medicus" of the Tungrian cohort was dug out here, and may be seen at Chesters as well as the scales for weighing drugs.

As one follows the wall, now some seven or eight courses in height, westward from here it disappears for a few hundred yards in a narrow belt of stunted, wind-smitten woodland, bristling thickly and picturesquely along the verge of a precipice, which is buttressed with natural platforms and pillars of basaltic rock, a more effectual defence than walls. Appearing again when the cliffs give way to steep, grassy slopes, the wall soon brings us to one of the best surviving specimens of a mile castle. Though its three sides, enclosing a square of some sixty feet across, are only from four to six





ROMAN WALL AT CUDDEYSS-CHAG

courses high, they are complete, while the gateway in the south wall still retains the lower blocks of the towers.

More than one ravine bites deeply through the basalt ridge. But the Roman builders cared nothing for ravines, carrying their masonry down one steep side and up the other, to seize again upon the highest point and cling to it, holding always the skyline of an immense country to the north and to the south.

Up here on these heights, and walking along the broad surface of the wall between Borcovicus and Crag Lough, there is at least as noble and inspiring a prospect as at any part of this west Northumbrian section. Though not just here more than a thousand, and never more than thirteen hundred feet above sea-level, the sensation is always that of a much higher altitude. Far away upon both sides are rounded crests and waving ridges innumerable, of greater, and many of twice the height. But distance effectually disposes of this predominance, robs them of all power, or of interference with the impression that one is here on the roof of the world, and a world, moreover, in which modern humanity counts for next to nothing, and a mysterious past for much. Immediately beneath and to the southward, in the wide grassy trough that runs along behind the wall, there are sparks of life to be sure—life of a sad and sombre aspect in small dour-looking, widely-scattered farmhouses, fashioned mainly of the stone that the legions of Agricola, of Hadrian, of Severus, had quarried and hewn. Beside some of them a thin plantation struggles bravely to break the force of the west winds, and black stone dykes trace themselves about the bare pastures. Very different are these from the great homesteads of lower and east Northumberland, and sheltering altogether another type of occupant. As late as 1700, Mr. Hodgson tells us, a gang of Armstrongs still made this country such an undesirable place of abode, that Houstead's farm, close to the camp, which, in his day, a century later, fetched £300 a year, was then sold in freehold for £58! One of the most conspicuous of those beneath us here, Bradley Hall, has a

peculiar interest in having sheltered Edward the First for some days as he came up the Stanegate, a Roman road, with his army on that last march to Scotland which ended everything for him at Burgh-on-Sands. Wade's Road, too, drives ahead beneath us, taking pasture land and hay meadow, moss and hill foot in its stride as if it were thinking of nothing but the rumble of artillery and the tramp of hurrying troops. On its edge sits a dejected-looking edifice, once an inn of great resort among the Scotch carriers, and bearing the strange device of The Twice Brewed. The green vallum, too, with its fosse and double banks pushes along, sometimes actually on the wall slope, sometimes in the bottom, persistent always, mysterious ever, and quite regardless of the torment of mind it causes among moderns. No stream courses down what I have called for that reason, if the distinction be permissible, a trough rather than a valley. But peaty burns, frothing and churning always when I was here, with constant rains, and struggling from the north through some deep gorge in the whinstone barrier of the wall, cross the open, and fight their way through the softer ridge beyond into the South Tyne. But away over all this broken foreground, beyond and over the valley of the South Tyne, which lies hidden behind it, and away over Allandale on the west, and over Hexhamshire on the east, you can see the dark moors and mountains of three counties; dark, at any rate, as they were to us in intermittent visions between the murk and wrack of flying storms. A solitary hour of sunlight, on a single day, showed us Cross Fell and the faint cone of Skiddaw. But the massive ridge of Tynedale head, and the sullen moorlands on the Cumbrian border above Alstone, were nearly always with us, and if they were always black and lowering, they were "nae the waur for that."

But it is the northern outlook from the wall that, of course, holds one most. You look to the south or west as over any other landscape that is interesting, beautiful, and bold. But to the north the sense of an age-long frontier is overmastering, for the really marvellous manner in which

nature and physical conditions have fortuitously lent themselves to perpetuate an ancient fact in a modern scene. For as far as the eye can see over a billowy waste of moss, moorland, and wild pasture, the Pict might almost be yet in possession. If it was all merely a conventional well-covered grouse moor that rolled up against the foot of the cliffs and steepes on which the wall is set, the picture would lose somewhat. A breath of the twentieth century would blow all over it, in spite of everything. But though there is plenty of heather growing naturally in large patches all about it, as it doubtless always grew, and a reasonable stock of grouse, as no doubt, even in Roman times, there always were, it does not suggest interminable rows of butts (though there are butts), nor does it make you think of Messrs. Lumley & Son, 101, Pall Mall. Let me hasten to discount, however, any inferences that might be drawn from such seeming heresies. I should be an ingrate indeed if I turned on those pursuits of feather and fur without which life's memories would be robbed of much more to many of us than the mere killing of things. But just here, this grand waste is unquestionably the better for not being an uncompromising grouse moor under modern conditions, and for wearing an aspect as nearly approaching primitive Britain as would be possible. It is true that a shepherd's house may be espied here and there upon the waste. But nothing worth mentioning is visible, and we can see twelve or fifteen miles away to where the narrow valley of the North Tyne—dreaded haunt, even in Tudor and Jacobean days, of lawless irresponsible wights—winds its shadowy course towards the Scottish lairs of other heroic evil-doers, with not a pin to choose between the two. And beyond the line of that beautiful and once unruly dale, the wilderness still heaves away over wastes of bare shadowy hills up the line of the Cheviots, till the bold tops of the monarchs of that range, whose acquaintance we have already made, rise faintly, if the day be clear, on the horizon. Such was the outlook of the Romans' sentinel, Gaul or Spaniard, African or Tuscan, as he paced the windy summit of the

Murus, on whose shrunken masonry we may now walk for miles as on an easy road. Let us hope he liked it! Our ecstasies, we may safely hazard, were not for him. He may well have doubted if the "old gods" could reach him here, and so built altars to ruder and sterner deities, that his fancy associated with such floods and fells and rasping winds.

A distinct and welcome note in the wild landscape, and just here close at hand are what are sometimes known as the Northumberland Lakes. That trio of them, which alone, from their situation, affect the landscape, and for their size are worthy of notice, are a mile or so apart. The smallest, Crag Lough, long and narrow in shape, and perhaps twenty acres in extent, nestles under a precipice of shaggy pine and birch wood, three hundred feet in height, and immediately beneath the line of the wall, saving the Romans thereby much labour and all anxiety for near half a mile. To the pilgrim approaching it from the east by the wall, and before dropping with the latter to the deep gap and farmhouse known as Hot Bank, it presents a most engaging picture; particularly when fired by a westering sun into a sheet of molten gold, as I was once privileged to see it near the close of a stormy day. Greenlee Lough, which may cover a hundred acres, lies out on the fringe of the wilderness partly skirted by fir plantings, from which peers the roof of a small shooting-box. Broomlee, a trifle smaller, is a little to the east and more under Borcovicus, and lies entirely among wild surroundings. Reed-skirted, peaty, shallow meres are these, the home of innumerable water-hens and the haunt in due season of a good store of nobler and more adventurous fowl, particularly the gulls that haunt the Northumbrian moors in great numbers, the small black-headed species nesting on their banks. The large non-gregarious gulls, Mr. Chapman says, breed in solitude all over the moors. I should like to have said more, had space permitted, of a long day's tramp we had into these solitudes beyond the wall. It was a sombre and harmonious day; but no reasonable distance was shut out, and all the spirit of the country made it desirable to see was

always visible. This fine waste between the wall and the North Tyne is, roughly speaking, a triangle, the river Irthing on the far west forming its third side and dividing it from Cumberland, into which it sprawls incontinently. But in the Northumbrian triangle there are, roughly speaking, about three hundred and fifty square miles. Nowhere, looking north from the Wall, where we have left it for the moment, to the North Tyne, do the moors rise as high as the twelve or thirteen hundred feet the Roman barrier climbs at its highest point, and this it is that gives to the latter the overlooking of so wide a region and such extraordinary distinction. Nor is it till you get down and out into this waste and look back at the wall from a mile or two away that you see how finely scarped and plated with smooth whinstone rock is the face of the ridge in places, that from above suggested only a continuous slope of turf. It is only down here, too, that you realize that the ridge actually carrying the wall is not the only one that drops in such rugged and abrupt fashion, and confronts the north with mailed breast. For what appears from the height of the Roman ridge mere smooth billows of green rolling away from its foot like an ocean in a swell develop, on a closer acquaintance, into a second, and sometimes a third, line of abrupt declivities on this northern front. Out here, too, beside their lower and outer ramparts, are piled up many fantastic crags. One of them marks the site of an Arthurian cave legend, very similar to those of Wales and the West of England. Arthur, up here, is a Strathclyde hero, and local tradition immures him under Sewingshields with Guinevere, his court, and thirty couple of hounds. A horn and a garter with a sword lie at the entrance to the cavern, and any mortal who may stumble upon it, blow the horn and cut the garter, will awake the whole sleeping company to an astonished and an astonishing world. A former tenant of Sewingshields, it is said, once discovered this subterranean haunt and its grizzly occupants. He mustered up courage to sever the garter, but when they all sat slowly up, waiting for the horn, the intruder apparently



did not like the look of them, and decided not to blow it, or perhaps fright had left him no breath for the operation, and the fearsome crew slowly relapsed again into their former state of coma. In his few brief moments of renewed vitality, however, King Arthur found the opportunity to declaim—

“O woe betide that evil day  
On which this witless wight was born,  
Who drew the sword, the garter cut ;  
But never blew the bugle horn.”

We wandered far and wide over rough pastures among Cheviot and black-faced sheep, through interludes of blooming heather where the grouse rose betimes, not, in these days of universal driving, pricking in the least degree the wanderer's conscience. Pewits swooped and drubbed, filling the air with their cries, and a scud of golden plovers now and again dashed across the heath. We sat down to our sandwiches by a shepherd's house, bearing the appropriate name of Cold Knuckles, but were driven from perch to perch by swarms of flying ants. We knocked in vain at the door of another solitary cabin under the shade of three wind-beaten ash trees, wherein abode a lonely ancient of literary habit, with whom my companion left a volume now and again. But there was no one within save a faithful dog, who, judging by the language it used, would have given an intruder an extremely rough reception. This place, or one like it, rejoiced in the name of “Blow Weary.” We crossed brawling burns lusty from recent rains and in good heart for their long voyage eastward to the North Tyne, and one or two obscure little tarns noisy and alive with water-fowl, mostly, no doubt, of the moorhen and coote variety. We pricked our way over peat mosses and passed, set near the edge of one, a long, straggling, high-gabled, deserted cottage homestead, built of purloined Roman stone and thatched with heather, that one might fancy could tell a tale of centuries, of smugglers, cattle thieves, and moss troopers. We also admired some basalt crags of the most fantastic shape, reared upon a knoll and lifted finely above the ruffled waters of the Broomlee Lough,





CRAIG TOUGH

that I was told had some connection with Queen Guinevere's hair-comb and a misunderstanding with her royal spouse. When we climbed again to the hospitable shelter of the old farmhouse at Hot Bank, near which I have left my reader, seated, as it were, on the wall during this parenthetical excursion, the hot griddle cakes and tea and other condiments, in which Northumbrian folk at five o'clock hold liberal views, were peculiarly grateful. Nor did the rain, which had held off all day, and now lashed furiously against the parlour window, in any way diminish our appreciation of them, though four miles still lay between us and Bardon Mill station away on the South Tyne. The girdle, or griddle, cake of Durham and Northumberland I used to hold in youth, when I had frequent opportunities of sampling it, beyond any product of even the lowland Scottish housewife who, everybody knows, wrought, and doubtless does so still, with exceptional cunning in articles of such nature. But a griddle cake must be home-made and served hot. The article of commerce, above all when proffered cold, stands as low on the list of fancy breads as the cold scone of the pastry-cook, and that is a poor thing enough. At Hot Bank, as I have said, Crag Lough glimmers delightfully along the foot of the feathered crags that are part of the line of the old Roman work. Beyond them the wall climbs away again conspicuous, and frequently on the edge of precipices towards its highest achievement on the summit of Whinshields, though rent across on the way thither by the two gaps of Steelrigg and Cats' stairs. At the former there is another farmhouse, where the wall descends the steep slopes, the skilful manner of its masonry being worthy of note. Below Whinshields, which rises beyond Steelrigg to a height of 1230 feet, and some way out to the northward is another ridge, known as Scotch Coulthard. Dr. Bruce tells us, as one may well credit, that the country beyond being unrideable to any not intimate with it, the moss troopers held themselves as safe from pursuit when they reached its edge, and the fact that many a skirmish took place in the last race between pursuers and pursued

between it and the wall is evident from the number of skeletons that were discovered when the land was being drained. The wanderer may still follow the wall with advantage on its curiously high and wild course for many miles yet, passing good specimens of mile castles, the one at Cawfields being the best of all. Just beyond this again, and five miles from Housteads, is the next camp, that of *Œsica*, covering three acres. Save for the fact that it retains its lines and the traces of its suburbs, there is nothing calling for further note here, though much might be said of it in a more technical place. Thence the wall continues its course over the summit of the "nine nicks of Thirlwall," rugged notches that can be seen against the sky-line at about eight hundred feet elevation over an immense area of country. After this the long serrated ridge of whinstone that has served it so long and nobly, begins to droop and filter out as it approaches the Cumbrian Border, and the wall with it passes out of all ken, at any rate of the present writer.

By the direct footway from Hot Bank to Bardon Mill, which is practically all down hill, since it follows an impetuous burn that has cut deep through the intervening ridge, one passes the important camp of *Vindolana*, one of those which lie detached from the wall, and in many cases, almost certainly in this one, were built in the first century by *Agricola*. Clearly defined on the green breast of a pasture field, above the spot where the Chinely burn enters the woody defile through which it travels noisily to the South Tyne, two miles below, the site of *Vindolana*, or *Chesterholme*, has none of the austerity of the other. The masonry is grass grown and within the green rampart there is nothing now to be seen. Excavations, begun two hundred years ago, were pursued with vigour and to completion by Mr. Hedley, its owner, early in the last century. Excavations in those days, as is truly said, only lightened the labours for the despoiler of all such stone-work as was not suitable for museums or collections. Mr. Hedley was an enthusiast, and spent his later years in work on these stations. He built a small villa

for himself by the stream below, mainly out of the material from the station, a proceeding which even a zealous antiquarian divine, in 1836, regarded as legitimate. Picturesquely but somewhat moistly nestling amid natural foliage at the brook's edge, it was tenantless and in the hands, when we were in its neighbourhood, of a leisurely pair of British workmen, so I took the opportunity of exploring this rather romantic lair of bygone antiquarian zeal. A roomy cottage house of low pitched rooms, deserted then, I think, for some time, with leaves waving all about it, and a large burn brawling through more leaves under the windows, it seemed to strike a properly sympathetic note. Houses built of masonry, already nearly two thousand years old, may fairly be said to inherit antiquity, and in this one there were many inscribed stones let into the walls, and more carrying the herring-bone marks of the Roman mason. I remember particularly the boar of the XXth Legion galloping under its motto, *Valens victrix*, on the wall of a dark passage leading down to the stream.

The fourth cohort of the Gauls were quartered here, and numbers of altars with other relics of that corps were taken hence and stand at Chesters and elsewhere, among them an inscription to Hadrian himself. But the most interesting object now *in situ* at Vindolana is a milestone, circular in shape and nearly six feet high, though, unfortunately, the lettering on it is no longer decipherable. It stands just without the garden fence of the cottage, and immediately upon the old and still very obvious Roman way of the Stanegate, which led directly past the north gate of Vindolana. In curious propinquity, too, is a large British tumulus clad with foliage. Bardon Mill station, just below here, is the best point for the visitor of a single day to the wall. Thence he can walk, or even drive, if necessary, on a passable but steep road to Housteads or Hot Bank. Those more fortunate in the matter of time, as we were privileged to be, can also use Haltwhistle or Greenhead, the two next stopping-places on the Carlisle line, when approaching or descending from the more westerly portions of the most striking section of this uttermost rampart of Imperial Rome.

## CHAPTER XI

### ALLENDALE

THIS lower corner of Northumberland to the south of the South Tyne and west of Hexham is a fine block of lofty upland capped with moors, whence sounding streams hurry northward through tortuous green-bottomed dales towards the main river. It is roughly a parallelogram, with Hexham and Blanchland set at its eastern, Alston and Haltwhistle at its western angles. Two little railroads run up into its heart from the main line along the Tyne—one from Hexham to Allendale, which boldly clings to the high hill-slope for the whole ten miles ; the other from Haltwhistle, which ascends the Tyne where reduced to the dimensions of a modest stream, its course turns sharp to the southward through deep glens to Alston. Allendale village may be regarded as the chief centre of this upland Arcady, and is perched about a mile beyond the terminus which bears its name, for apparently the little line refused to struggle any further up the hills. Still higher up the valley are some lead mines, and elsewhere are the traces of disused ones, but not of a nature to detract in any way from the freshness of the landscape. The village is prettily set upon a ledge above the East Allen amid a sufficiency of foliage to give it an air of snugness and luxuriance amid the encompassing hills. It straggles round a great open space, and in August, when I was there, was much given over to summer visitors. There is really no occasion for the wanderer in this country to hunt up Allendale town at all. We happened to be urged there by the cravings of hunger and thirst after a walk from Hexham

through the sequestered back-country of the "Shire," and thence over the intervening moors, which were then great waves of purple bloom. It was a hot and blazing day. I had fondly pictured to myself some snug parlour behind a bar where the foaming tankard might be quaffed in the company of a sheep farmer or two or some other entertaining native. But Allendale proved deplorably fashionable. Two or three brakes were loading or unloading Tynesiders, while individuals in summer suits lounged about, wearing that air of proprietorship which the summer visitor, when he has been more than two seasons to the same place, automatically assumes. There might have been bars, but not snug ones, harbouring original bucolics. We ultimately found ourselves in a very much occupied hotel, and driven by a relentless fate into an upstairs coffee-room of colossal proportions and garish complexion, where, seated at a long table, a voracious *bourgeoisie* were disposing of a five-o'clock meal of roasted joints and tea. We had managed badly, or rather suffered ourselves to be managed too much.

But the normal way to get by road to Allendale is along the South Tyne to Haydon Bridge and thence upward into the hills, and a very excellent and interesting road it is, both for certain objects of antiquity that stand hard by it, and for the fine curves of the broad river flashing from pool to rapid in the meadowy vale below. This is the main attraction for the six miles of uplifted road that lead to Haydon Bridge, at which point one may be said to touch the inner sanctuary of the raiders and the southernmost of the three famous valleys, those of North Tyne and Rede being the others.

At Haydon Bridge, a large village whose chief attraction lies in its fine old bridge across the Tyne, was one of the fords affected by Scottish armies when they had swept Northumberland, and had their eyes on the ample spoils of the rich Durham bishops and the priors of Hexham. The bridge has some further interest, too, in having been the only one standing high up the Tyne in the turbulent sixteenth century.



When the river rose behind Scottish or North Tynedale raiders into the bishoprick, it was their only chance of escape, and was chained in consequence, as in the famous ballad of "The Rookhope Ride." In the time of Elizabeth, when the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland were making their ill-starred insurrection, the Tynedale rievvers took the opportunity of pricking into Weardale, where they were repulsed, chased, and worsted.

"Then in at Rookhope head they came,  
 They ran the first but a mile ;  
 They gathered together in four hours,  
 Six hundred sheep within a while.  
 Their limmer thieves they have good beasts ;  
 They never think to be o'erthrown.  
 Three banners against Weardale men they bear,  
 As if the world were all their own."

The church at Haydon Bridge is little more than a century old ; for the original village stood on the breast of the high hill to the northward, and the chancel of its twelfth century church with a chantry still survives there, in occasional use and good repair, and possessed of a curiously narrow triple lancet window in the east end. Many very ancient inscribed grave-covers have been let into the walls and windows of the little church, which is partly composed of Roman stones, and has a Roman altar for a font. An eccentric epitaph, relating to the cheerfulness with which an individual of Queen Anne's time underwent several operations for dropsy, may be read on a tomb in the graveyard outside, and is much quoted. But my fancy was much more taken by one the vicar pointed out in the later churchyard below, obviously to a local songster—

"Be not offended at our good complaint,  
 Ye quire of angels that have gained a saint,  
 Where full perfection meet in skill and voice :  
 We mourn our loss, but yet commend your choice."

The colloquial familiarity of this is not, I think, easy to match, and quite worthy of that complacent generation who ground hand-organs in church, and endeavoured to sing up to them.

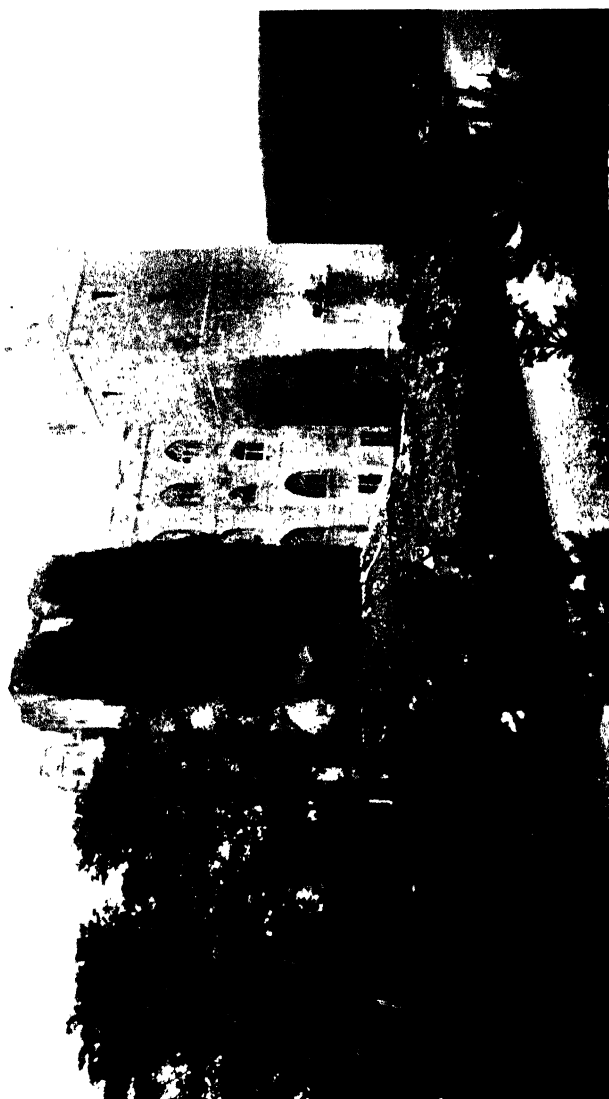
On the bridge, which is of six arches, a horn was wont to be blown in the more primitive days of fox-hunting as a summons to the trencher-fed hounds from the surrounding country. Clear and rapid as is this South Tyne, the salmon, as I mentioned before, prefer the northern stream, and comparatively few pass up here under Haydon Bridge, nor is it nowadays, at any rate, nearly as good a trout stream as the other. There were such fine freshets, however, in this particular August that the very look of one of them fining down into an alluring sherry colour tempted me to a whole morning's wading in it with a trout-rod against my better judgment. An ardent disciple, too, from a far south-western county, where the trout rise in any summer month under such conditions, egged me on. I ought to have known from a well-earned experience how completely the trout of most of these larger rapid rivers abjure the fly in late July and most of August. But for the whole of that pleasant balmy morning, at any rate, we cast ours with futile zeal and patience on the amber shallows, the black whirling eddies below the rocks, and over the long streaming pools. It was a perfect morning's fishing, except for the fish. Woods rose high above the broad brawling river on its further shore, and long beds of shingle, only just dry from the late-fallen floods, spread wide along the hither one, where sandpipers and yellow wagtails preened themselves in the sun far from the world's alarms, and the water, reflecting a hundred colours from the varied bottom and the changing skies, surged along, mocking our efforts with its very perfection of condition. The angler has many consolations beside fish, which partly account for what the outsider considers his abnormal patience. When we sat down on a rock to discuss our sandwiches at midday, I don't think we had any idea of abandoning the pursuit, though neither of us had seen the fin of anything bigger than a samlet. But at that moment the figure of a salmon-fisher, with a rod that could have landed a whale, broke upon our solitude, and eyed us curiously—I fancied also pityingly. He was an amiable-looking, orange-whiskered,

large-limbed person, as he needed to be with such tackle. As a Northumbrian always waits for a stranger to break the ice, we inquired after his fortunes. He had done nothing himself, he said, though he seemed greatly cheered by the rumour of a fish having been caught two days previously below Haydon Bridge. He evidently thought us natural fools to be throwing a trout-fly on the South Tyne at that date, and practically said so, a suspicion that had long been ripening into a certainty in my own mind. But before we had done with him, he had unfolded, not perhaps too willingly, a career beside which our four hours of pleasant futility were as nothing. He admitted that he was fond of salmon-fishing and that he frequented this reach with tolerable assiduity, but a searching cross-examination extracted the further admission, which was creditable to his honesty, that he had never yet caught a fish ! We watched him work down a fine pool below us, and his line seemed to fly out with reasonable straightness from the telegraph-post that drove it, so one must suppose he was one of the unlucky ones of this earth, or that very few salmon patronized the South Tyne. But very likely he was a poet, and saw all sorts of things in the face of the moving waters and in the depths of the woods above, and was quite happy. We could hardly stay, however, after this, though it had been hinted we might get a trout or two after sunset. But we had not proposed to spend the night here, and it was now midday, so we acknowledged ourselves defeated, and carried away nothing but the memory of a pleasant interview at the closest quarters with a mile or so of a river famous in story and good to look upon. Yet how curiously dual is the personality of these water gods. The world pictures the deity of the Tyne as a grim Hercules wielding a coal-pick or a sledge-hammer ; but a wanderer, such as we have been, in his kingdom would always instinctively recall it as a fair domain of pellucid waters and fresh woods, of purple moors and hoary towers eloquent of "old unhappy far-off things."

Perched midway on the long slope that trends upward



ELSA ALFANI



and southward from the Tyne to the Hexhamshire moors, the grey towers of Langley dominate this reach of the vale. After standing for five centuries in ruin, the castle was acquired by the late Mr. Bates, the historian, and made habitable within, while without, to judge from early photographs, the only serious addition to its general appearance has been the repairs of the top of the towers and the restoration of the battlements. This modified effort by a distinguished antiquary, to give his possession the full measure of such external dignity as belonged to it in the time of the Edwards, may or may not attract the beholder. But compared with some restorations, the amount required externally was so slight, and the details to be supplied so obvious, that they need, I think, detract nothing from such pleasures of the imagination as this really imposing pile may offer to the beholder. Four massive corner towers of unequal size seem at the first sight—the curtains being somewhat short—to comprise most of the building, which stands up proud and weather beaten, massive and sombre on its raised platform. In spite of internal alterations, no modern lights noticeable in a general view, spoil the stern, warlike expanse of tower or curtain. Some of the original Pointed and Decorated windows have been restored at the north and south end, but for the most part the castle is as complete a picture, either from the heights above or the vale below, of a fourteenth-century Border fortress as one might wish for. The very fact, as the late owner pointed out, of having been gutted by fire some fifty years after its erection, and practically never touched again, may curtail its historical interest, but architecturally, as a specimen of its day, is of course immensely in its favour, seeing how bravely it has defied both time and the despoiler.

The barony of Langley, of which the castle and its manor-house predecessor was the centre, has some retrospective interest in having been politically outside, though geographically within, the franchise of Tynedale; that is to say, the basin of the two Tynes as far east as Hexhamshire, and this is only worth noting here as that region had been handed

over to the Kingdom of Scotland by Henry the Second, as compensation to William the Lion for his loss of the Earldom of Northumberland. It remained so till the time of Edward the First, who, as may be imagined with his soaring but unfulfilled ambitions and lawyer-like temperament, did not tolerate this kind of patchwork, unless it went in his favour, as in the case of portions of Roxburgh, which remained English ground long after his day.

So the Scottish officials of those days held their Courts throughout the whole country west and north-west of Hexham, actually travelling through the barony of Langley, which, for reasons unknown, remained English ground, and some of the records of their progress remain. This, too, is of interest, as emphasizing the well-known fact that the real Border feuds, *qua* Border, had not yet begun. War was still international in a wide sense, and even thus devoid of bitterness, or else it was the normal though fierce enough quarrels of individuals. Liddesdale and Teviotdale were not yet pitted against Tyne and Rede. Population in these parts, at any rate, was then no doubt thin enough, and not, as in the days to come of Border feuds and forays, too numerous for an honest living on so cold a soil. The early owners of Langley, who were regarded as Lords of "Tinedale," do not matter here. It will be enough to say that it came by marriage to the Lucys, the third of whom was that famous Sir Thomas, who fought at Crecy, and being sent home immediately afterwards to negotiate a truce with Scotland, arrived just in time to head a column in that heterogeneous army which crushed the Scots at Neville's Cross. It was mainly he who, with the spoils of Crecy and moneys received on account of Neville's Cross, built the strong fortress, poised three hundred feet above the Tyne, and fronting northward to the rugged skyline of the Roman wall, that we now see; a worthy monument of so renowned a soldier and two famous victories. One might add, too, that the motive for raising a castle where a manor-house had hitherto sufficed, was not vanity but self-defence, and its promptings were common enough along both

sides of the Border. The international attitude was by now thoroughly embittered, and Lucy's barony on the South Tyne, seems to have been sorely wasted by the Scottish army on the march towards that fatal field, where he himself played the victor's part. Begun about 1350, the castle was gutted in 1405, as is supposed by the troops of Henry the Fourth in his campaign against the rebellious Earl of Northumberland, into whose hands it had then passed. From the Percies it went to the Nevilles, and in the seventeenth century to the Ratcliffes, falling, under the attainder of the Earl of Derwentwater with the rest of his property, to the Trustees of Greenwich Hospital, who sold it to the late restorer.

Some two miles up the Tyne, the Allen enters it from the south, issuing from a glen whose heights are richly draped in the ample woodlands of Ridley Hall. But the ancient headquarters of the Ridleys, from whom this latter seat takes its name, lies a couple of miles further up the Tyne, and on the same bank, within sight of the station and village of Bardon Mill. This is the fortified manor-house of Willimoteswyke, which is, and has been for many generations, the residence of substantial farmers; a large embattled gate-tower showing in front of a low residence, flanked with two smaller towers, and beautifully situated on swelling ground just above the river. The gate-tower, which is some forty feet by twenty, still retains its old rooms, with chimneys and windows but little altered; the battlements project imposingly, as in most of these Northumbrian fortresses, on a row of corbels while an archway, still containing the upper hinges and the hole for the slip bar, leads into a large courtyard. The manor-house, though plain, is unspoiled, and externally harmonious with the spirit of the place. Inside it has of necessity been more or less adapted to modern uses. But the smaller towers on the flank behind are curious, being only some sixteen feet by eight, and tapering gradually towards the battlements, which have disappeared. The curtain walls which surrounded the courtyard have practically



vanished, and been replaced by farm buildings of various dates.

The place would appeal even to those with small interest in Border heroes as the early home of Nicholas Ridley, the famous Bishop of London, and Marian martyr, who was burnt at Oxford in 1555. It belonged to a Nicholas Ridley in 1484. A Nicholas Ridley was still in possession, and of sufficient importance to be a commissioner for arranging the truce with Scotland, broken by Flodden. His son, too, was a Sir Nicholas, and his son again, though doubtless a younger one, if, indeed, he was not a nephew was the heroic bishop. "He was born in mine own Northumberland," says his friend Turner, the Dean of Wells, "at the village of Wilowmontiswik, and descended from the noble stock of the Ridleys." There were Ridleys at Unthank, too, close by, and that place, though the original house is replaced by a modern one, claims to be the bishop's birthplace. It does not much matter, as there are pathetic farewell letters from him to his sister, at Unthank, and his cousin at Willimoteswyke, in which he appeals to the latter as "Bell wether to order and conduct the rest" (of the Ridley family).

A pious legend due to the late Mr. Surtees' use of poetic licence, and somewhat akin to that which attributes the Forsters' financial ruin to the 'fifteen, seems to have generally credited the downfall of the Ridleys to their loyalty to the Stuart cause. As a matter of fact, the last Ridley of Willimoteswyke had been bought out by a Neville before the civil war began, and was already but a tenant on the estate, and after the Restoration the Nevilles sold it to the Blacketts, who own it now. But the Ridleys had been a great race, and we are now inside that country where men had to do or die, and existed most certainly in the matter of goods and chattels just so long as they had the power to keep them.

Not long before the bishop's martyrdom these Ridleys of Willimoteswyke and their relations were concerned in the killing of Sir Albany Featherstonehaugh, a neighbour with whom they were at feud. The raid of Featherstonehaugh

was described in a modern antique ballad by Surtees, who, on the strength of his intimacy with Scott, played so sore a practical joke on him with this same composition that it is thought he never had the heart to undeceive him and enjoy his own success. In the first canto of *Marmion* it will be remembered how the harper is called in to entertain that haughty soul after the feast at Norham, and fails signally with the "barbarous lay" that tells—

"How the fierce Thirwalls and Riddleys all,  
Stout Willimoteswick,  
And that Hard riding Dick  
And Hughie of Hawden and Will o' the wal  
Have set on Sir Albany Featherstonehaugh,  
And taken his life at the Deadmanshaw."

To make it worse, Scott explains in a footnote how an old woman at Alston had repeated it to the agent there, who had transcribed it for the benefit of Mr. Surtees, who, in turn had kindly supplied Sir Walter himself with it. The supposed old woman averred that when she was a girl it used to be sung "till the roof rang again." Sir Walter introduced it into "*Marmion*," he tells us, for the better preservation of so valuable an old ballad. Mr. Surtees must assuredly have felt he had a little over-done it when he received his presentation copy. Early in the eighteenth century, one William Lowes lived at Willimoteswyke, a gentleman of family and position, though obviously, according to Mr. Bates, who must have had practical as well as antiquarian reasons for familiarity with the title deeds, not its owner. At any rate, he was a county keeper, an important office, surviving from March Warden organization, and had charge of the South Tyne. A Charlton of the chief clan or greyne of Redesdale held the same honourable office for that almost adjacent country. But instead of keeping the peace, these two custodians of the law fell into a deadly feud with one another, and for several years kept the whole country in an uproar by their uncontrollable antipathies. Several encounters seem to have taken place, all in the reign of Queen

Anne, in which the Redesdale champion proved always the more valiant, Lowes apparently escaping serious injury by the admirable horses he kept. On one occasion he only saved his life through an old woman slamming a gate in the face of Charlton, of Leehall, who was right on his heels. On another, near Bellingham, in the heart of the enemy's country, Lowes' horse was killed by a stab made at the rider's thigh, and he only saved himself by leaping on another and making a bolt for it. A well-known quatrain written by a follower of Willimoteswyke preserves this incident—

“ Oh, had Leehall been but a man  
As he was never ne'an,  
He wad have stabbed the rider  
And litten the horse ale'an.”

But Leehall was very much of a man, for eventually, at a conflict near Sewingshields on the Wall, he not only worsted Lowes, but captured him. Then it seems killing was not a sufficiently sweet revenge, so the unfortunate keeper of South Tynedale was borne away to Leehall, hard by the meeting of the North Tyne and Rede, and there chained to the kitchen grate with just enough tether to admit of his eating at the servants' table. From this durance vile the Willimoteswyke following were not sufficiently strong enough, or stout-hearted enough, to deliver their chieftain, and as he and his tormentor alone represented the arm of the law in this lawless country, they had the situation to themselves, or rather one of them had. But close to Haydon Bridge there lived at that time a famous character, one Frank Stokoe, of a good name, but small patrimony. He was so large, however, and so courageous, and so independent, that he did pretty much what he liked with impunity, among other things exercising sporting rights with his dogs over the whole country, no one being bold enough to say him nay. So the Willimoteswyke faction in their trouble sought his assistance, and the enterprise being suited to his taste, he proceeded straightway to Leehall before Charlton was out of bed, and gave him the option of releasing Lowes or suffering the weight of his

untimely visitor's hand. Even the bellicose Charlton did not take long in choosing, and Mr. Lowes was duly unchained and restored to his friends, whose loyalty under the circumstances was commendable, even if their attitude was undignified. Stokoe, however, had made enemies, who were not disposed to lie down under this and other humiliations, and one winter night, while wrapped in slumber in his house near Haydon Bridge, he was awakened by his daughter, who told him that a party outside were trying to draw the bolt of the front door. Slipping downstairs, he saw the point of a knife insidiously at work with this intent. So, loading his musket with slugs, and dropping through the trap-door into the lower story, where the cows were kept, he passed stealthily out of this basement door to the foot of the stone steps, which in those comparatively peaceful times led up to the front story in place of the old-fashioned ladder, and there he beheld four men with a dark lantern, still engaged upon his door-lock. Then, with some wealth of invective, at which, among his other accomplishments, he was an adept, he swore he would make the starlight shine through some of them, and putting his threat into immediate execution, dropped one dead, whereat the others vanished in terror into the darkness. After this he secured his doors again, and retired quite unconcernedly to the sleep of the just. In the morning the body had been carried away, leaving a trail of frozen blood down the steps, which apparently closed the incident. Stokoe joined Lord Derwentwater in the 'fifteen, and escaped from Preston by leaping his horse over a wall. He went to London afterwards in disguise, with a view to bringing his leader's body back to Dilston, the Government having refused that privilege to the widow. While there a skilful Italian swordsman was vaunting his prowess against any and all comers, and Stokoe, who possessed great skill of fence, added to his vast physical strength, was persuaded by his friends to an encounter, which resulted in the fatal spitting of the foreigner. In his mission concerning Derwentwater's remains he succeeded also, and these were conveyed, as we

know, to the vault at Dilston. Stokoe, however, was a proscribed man, and even after the general pardon never succeeded in recovering his position. Such was Tynedale even under the first George.

What it was like in the days of the Tudors, and what things were done there, is almost better realized in the matter-of-fact official reports of contemporary writers than in the abundance of more ornate literature in prose and verse that might suggest colour, if the sober documents did not endorse it. This South Tyne was not quite so turbulent as the northern dale and the Rede, since it did not lead directly into Scotland. But this is a mere detail, for the slice of Cumberland which lay between was no defence. Its lawless people were raiders first, and Englishmen afterwards. The very March was quite uncertain, and in the wide strips of debatable land outlaws and broken men had attached themselves to the indigenous clans, and swollen their numbers to formidable proportions. The Armstrongs of Liddesdale, with their allies, the Elliots, pressed most heavily on the South Tyne. They could muster, it was said, three thousand horses between them; while the former, more detached and more democratic community of despoilers, had a refuge in Tarras Moss, whither they could convey their goods and stow their plunder and their prisoners, and defy the authorities of both kingdoms almost with impunity. Tarras Moss was then a lonely waste, "two spears' length" in depth, with dry spots of uplifted woody ground within it, that the Elliot-Armstrong combination could pick their way to and maintain themselves upon till their enemies were weary of waiting. I do not know the Liddle, but I am told that within the memory of old people its banks were strewn with the ruins of towers and pele houses, in which these nimble foragers raised their hardy broods. Along this South Tyne, too, there are even yet the remains of several pele houses, altered or added to for modern usage; for there were three orders of fortresses on the Border, the castle, the pele tower, and the pele house. The latter, a mere lofty rectangular stone cottage, not, of

course, crenulated, but like the other, with the living-room on the first floor, reached by a movable ladder and the byre beneath. Around most of them and all the larger towers was a wall or stockade, enclosing the barmekyn, into which the stock were herded at the first sign of war or raid. It was the first defence which might or might not be maintained. If carried, the house or tower itself, with its stores, and perhaps its choicest animals in the basement, was usually secure, its defenders, with either bows or musquets, and heavy stones, being at a great advantage. Failing attempts to smoke the little garrison out with straw, there was nothing to be done but to pass on to other like scenes of ravage. Slow sieges, one need hardly say, were not in the programme of the raiders, even had the spoil been worth them.

Haltwhistle, the last little country town in South Tyne-dale and Northumberland, some three miles above the mouth of the Allen, had a very lively time of it in the good old days. A famous ballad, known as *The Raid of Hautwhistle*, commemorates an occasion when its sacking and burning by the Armstrongs was accompanied by even more individual feats of arms than usual. At Haltwhistle the Tyne leaves both highway and railroad to pursue their westward course to Carlisle by more tortuous ways through the barren country, and itself turns upward towards the southern moors and its source, as if to maintain, as far as possible, its character as a Northumbrian stream. Hence, too, a little railroad branches away with the river and follows its now greatly diminished and more continually fretful stream by winding ways, beneath green fern-clad steepes and hanging woods, to Alston, deep sunk in the hollow of mighty hills.

I am not qualified to say much of modern Haltwhistle. It lies picturesquely when viewed from the heights above that lead to the Roman wall. My only progress through it, at the close, too, of a long day's walk, was a prolonged, laborious, and breathless struggle to catch a quite vital train to Hexham. To its length I can testify, and, being credited with a population of only sixteen hundred, it can

have no breadth to speak of. Its interminable main street, I can say, I hope without prejudice, and with sufficient accuracy, is quite unlovely, and wears the stoney, austere expression of the northern town in a most unmitigated and uncompromising degree, as if determined that whatever its fate might have in store it should, at least, be fireproof. The church is, I believe, both ancient and interesting, while hard by is a mound carrying the remains of a tower that, no doubt, was in its day quite indispensable to the peace of mind of the burgesses, if one can fit such civic sounding term to any one who had the hardihood to live in Upper Tynedale, or imagine them enjoying, or perhaps wishing to enjoy, peace of mind.

The numerous Riddleys were, of course, the leaders about Haltwhistle and took a notable hand in the two engagements at the close of the fifteenth century, which stirred the local muse to the before-mentioned ballad—

“ The limmer thieves o’ Liddesdale  
Wadna leave a kye in the hail countrie,  
But an’ we gie them the caud steel,  
Or gear they’ll reive it a’ awaye,  
Sae pert the stealis. I you say,  
O’ late they came to Hawtewessyll,  
And thowt they there wad drive a fray,  
But Alec Rydly shotte tae well.”

Nevertheless, the Liddesdale men got away with sufficient booty to make a subject of complaint by Sir Robert Carey to the Scottish king, who curtly replied that the Armstrongs were no subjects of his.

Upon this the Tynedale men took the matter as usual into their own hands and raided Liddesdale, killing, among others, the leader of the Armstrongs.

“ John Rydly thrust his speir  
Reet thro’ Sim o’ the Cathills wame.”

Sim o’ the Cathill was a prodigious hero, and his death brought down the Armstrongs again on Haltwhistle.

“ Then came Wat Armstrong to the town,  
 Wi’ some three hundred chiel or mair,  
 And sweir that they wad bren it down,  
 A’ clad in Jack wi’ bow and spear.”

And so apparently they did, in spite of Alec Rydley—

“ Who lette flee  
 A clothyard shaft ahint the wa’,  
 It struck Wat Armstrong in the ’ee,  
 Went thro’ his steel cap, heed and a’,  
 I wot it made him quickly fa’,  
 He cu’dna rise tho’ he essayed,  
 The best at thief craft or the Ba’,  
 He neer again shall ride a raid.”

This note of lament on the death of a great football player may surprise the reader, but football was even then a popular game on the Borders, and in the intervals of cutting one another’s throats, Elliots, Armstrongs, and Scotts seem to have occasionally measured their strength against the Riddleys, Charltons, Robsons, and Halls in a friendly contest. These early international matches must have been Homeric contests indeed! Sir Robert Carey has left very illuminating accounts of his endeavours to put down disorder on the middle March. He even undertook, what had baffled the Scottish Earl of Angus with a large force, to wit, the subjection of the Armstrongs in their refuge at Tarras Moss. Carey was a new broom, and a south countryman. He made an appeal to the fighting leaders of the Northumbrian Border, but the older heads laughed at him, and declared that he might hem the Armstrongs in for the whole summer, but that with winter he would have to leave himself, and the others would be out again with greater enterprise than ever. Some of the younger *gentils*, however, he says, joined him, bringing three or four horses apiece, while besides his own soldiers he had the help of a Royal Scottish corps quartered in Liddesdale. So altogether he had fifty or sixty gentlemen, and several hundred rank and file. On reaching Tarras Moss in June they built a fort and cabins for the better sort to lie in, which they fitted with mattresses and beds, and made



themselves generally comfortable. The Armstrongs, in the mean time, secure in the woody and impenetrable moss, sent jeering messages to Carey, telling him he was like the first puff of a haggis, but would soon cool off, and that when winter came they, in their turn, "would play their parts and keep him waking."

Carey and his friends, however, stuck to it till August, and then practised a pretty ruse on the Armstrongs, who were only expecting danger from the English side of the moss. The Warden, however, succeeded in getting one hundred and fifty mounted men, unknown to his enemy, by a circuitous route of thirty miles, on to the Scottish end of the waste, where they hid themselves in their ambuscades. Then, with three hundred horses and a thousand foot, he pressed the outlaws hard at various points. The upshot of all this was that five of their chief men were captured, and, if nobody else was, the Armstrongs had, at least, been very much harried and greatly inconvenienced. At any rate, Carey disbanded his force and marched back, much pleased with himself, and declared that God had greatly blessed him, and that he was never afterwards troubled with these sort of men. How his successors fared is another matter. With the union of the kingdoms, which followed immediately, there was some improvement, as great numbers of Borderers were shipped off to fight in Ireland and settled in Ulster, among that virile race whose prosperity on Irish soil is a standing object-lesson to any one but those whose eyes do not wish to see. Many a grandson of a Border raider stood behind the walls of Derry. Thousands of Ulstermen to-day could claim descent from the hardy reivers of the Liddel and the Teviot, the Tyne and the Redewater. Thousands, too, of that stout Scotch-Irish stock who did more in proportion to their numbers than any other breed in the making of eighteenth-century America, would find their origin in the same turbulent source. All round Haltwhistle are the remains, or the site of, fortresses. Blenkinsopp castle covers one; Ballister is still a ruin; so is Thirlwall, four miles to the westward, and within easy reach





STAWARD PILE

of the Nine Nicks of Thirlwall, over which the Roman Wall climbs on its way to Cumberland. Blenkinsopps owned it in the fifteenth century, and in the next one it had an evil reputation for cattle lifting. The name of Thirlwall is traditionally derived from the first thirle, or breach, in the wall made by the Picts.

But we have now overleaped the mouth of the Allen by some miles, and returning there and pursuing its romantic windings upwards for a space, the most beautifully poised of almost any of the old Border fortresses may be seen standing on a green ledge at the verge of a woody precipice many hundred feet above the stream. There is very little left, to be sure, of Staward Pele, though enough to give effect to its superb situation. Nor, again, does it move one any the less from the fact that much of its masonry is Roman, and that a Roman altar, carved with a bull's head, lies wedged high up among its crumbling walls.

Staward seems to have been a sort of communal fortress, built for the defence of the neighbourhood generally, and a refuge for its goods and chattels. It was the property of Hexham Abbey, being, in fact, on the fringe of the monks' domain of Hexhamshire, though after the Dissolution it became the residence of the Bacon family. But much the most interesting occupant of the Pele known to fame was one Dicky of Kingswood, one of those latter-day characters who, even in the eighteenth century, did a little quiet raiding, just to keep up, as it were, the old traditions of the Border, if only in a faint and unheroic fashion, and there is one immoral but humorous exploit of this wily soul that I cannot pass over.

Now, it fell out that on a certain occasion when Dicky was returning from Newcastle, a pair of fat oxen grazing in a field at Denton burn near that city sorely tempted him. So, hanging about till nightfall, he entered the field and brought them successfully away. Their owner, on missing them in the morning, set off upon a false scent, going due north towards the Tweed. Dicky in the mean time had driven his

prizes due west, to Lanercost, in Cumberland. Here an old farmer took a fancy to the cattle, and Dicky to him, on account of a mare he was riding, so the Cumbrian purchased the beasts from our hero for a reasonable sum in cash, and, pleased with his bargain, asked the vendor to his house. There, seated over the social glass, Dicky asked his host what he would take for the mare, whereat the other replied that no price would buy her, for her like was not in Cumberland. Dicky professed agreement with him, and asked if he was not afraid he would find his stable empty some morning. "No fear whatever," said the owner, for the mare occupied a stall under his own bedroom, and he kept her tied to the manger. Dicky was somewhat taken aback at this, but expressed a cunning hope that the old bachelor had a good lock. The old man was so pleased with his precautions that he invited his treacherous guest to inspect his stable, which he did, and pronounced favourably on its security. Having encouraged his host to some further libations, he left him to sleep them off, and took his departure. It is needless to say that when the Cumbrian awoke in the morning, his stable door was open and the steed had gone. Cursing the guile of his visitor and the simplicity of himself, he raised a hue and cry, but there was no trace of the thief, and he had to resign himself sorrowfully to his loss.

Dicky, in the mean time, had galloped away eastward with the price of the bullocks and the mare to the good. On Haltwhistle Fell he ran right into a man whom he recognized as the owner of the oxen, but who had no knowledge on his part of Dicky, and innocently inquired if by chance he had seen anything of a yoke of oxen on the road. Dicky at once replied that he had, and directed the inquirer to the farm where he had left them. The farmer was on foot and tired, and eying the other's horse proposed to purchase it. This was not so difficult, as the unblushing tenant of Staward began to think that things were getting a little warm, and handed over the stolen horse for the moderate sum which the other, provided against emergencies, was able to pay on

the spot. Moreover, Dicky had a strong sense of humour, which in this case overbore his greed.

So when the despoiled farmer from Denton arrived at the homestead of the despoiled farmer near Lanercost, the first thing he saw was his own pair of oxen grazing in a pasture, and, as may be imagined, he demanded of the honest Cumbrian in somewhat heated language how he came by them. But the other's attention was wholly riveted on his own mare, and his choler may well have choked his utterance, in that a man should ride up on his own stolen horse and address him as a cattle thief. Tradition says that when the mystery was cleared up the two honest souls were so overcome with the humour of the situation that they quietly resumed each their own property, and if they had any clear notion concerning Dicky, who retained the price of both, they agreed to let bygones be bygones.

Dialect experts draw a line across the Tyne, somewhere about Bardon Mill; a line which has followed the eastern base of the Cheviots all the way down from the Tweed, and then continue it southward up Allendale, which marks the limit of the Northumbrian burr. Westward of this the Cumbrian or Scottish influence respectively predominates, and are obvious enough to any one with an ordinary ear or reasonable acquaintance with Border speech. In all such cases it is rather the inflection and pitch of voice that differs than the written dialect. The Scottish trill of the "r," however, is as widely removed from the Northumbrian burr—which, again, has nothing in common with what is sometimes called the burr in southern England—as two sounds can be. Across Tweed or Cheviot, again, *haugh*, like all words ending in "gh" or "ch," would be guttural. In Northumberland it is "harf," while *lough* is "lof." *Trough* and *bought*, which, north of the Border, are of course guttural, are usually "trow" and "bowt." *Plough* is "pleugh" or "pluf." Northumbrians hold the "b" as superfluous in words like *humble* and *tumble*, and perhaps one of the most characteristic notes is the sounding of "u" as "o," as in "chorch" (church), which on top of

the burred "r" is unique, and would certainly produce nostalgia when heard by an exiled Northumbrian as promptly, I imagine, as any word; though it might do his heart even more good to hear a new chum in Australia or Manitoba respond to a greeting with "Aa's aal reet." Stone, so prominent an article in Northumbria, has a very archaic form: "styen" in some parts, in others "steen." The "h" is never dropped, and is always sounded after "w," as it is everywhere in the north, and indeed all over Ireland and America.

The county subdivides itself into four, or indeed five, dialects, including the western fringe of Scottish and Cumbrian—to wit, north and south Northumbrian; Tyneside, which includes Newcastle; a strip of Durham and little more; and lastly, west Tyne, centering in Hexham. True Tyneside is said to have been stereotyped by the great numbers of dalesmen who were driven down there by local congestion, the suppression of raiding, and the development of the coal trade. Whatever the strain that founded the tongue which Geordie talks, it is far the most uncouth of all to the alien ear. It is a masterful tongue, too, that gives way to nothing, but rather forces itself on the alien workmen. As the Saxon miner often learns Welsh in the Glamorgan mines, though rural Glamorgan seldom even understand it, so the Yorkshireman, I take it, who throws in his lot with Tynesiders, is drawn irresistibly to their manner of speech, though rural Northumberland converses far more lucidly. But the few haphazard instances of Northumbrian sounds I ventured to notice are of general application outside the quasi-Scottish belt, and the gradual drifting into this latter, whether in the staunch burr country to the north or over the burr line to the west, may always serve to interest the wanderer who cares for such things. After all, education has had more influence than we sometimes admit. There is no question that the Northumbrian hind, or the Cumbrian statesman, or the Wiltshire shepherd, still speak their vernacular in a fine and racy fashion, possibly even unintelligible to the Cockney. But encounter a veteran of four-score in a remote situation in any of these

counties, and you will be apt to find any conceit you may secretly cherish in the matter of vernaculars rudely shaken. Judging from such experiences, I am inclined to think that if the cashier of a Hexham bank were to find himself discussing a financial accommodation with the shade of Frank Stokoe, or Sim o' the Cathill, or Dicky of Staward, or even an aristocrat like Alec Ridley, he would need an interpreter. I have an idea that even John Peel would be tolerably incoherent to the modern of even reasonable acquaintance with current vernacular. I once spent an afternoon and took a long walk at Caldbeck with his aged nephew, who used to help him with his kennel, and his speech, or, rather, his handling of it, on which I naturally hung with more than average attention, was of another quality from that of the average Cumbrian farmer that many tourists know.

Two miles above Staward the stream divides into two vales, known as the East and West Allen. Up the former lies the townlet of Allendale, already noticed; up the latter are no such collections of humanity, but only the beautiful and leafy hamlet of Whitfield, after which the deep, treeless vale carries a single line of small homesteads till it filters out into high heather and solitude. Crossing the broad-backed ridge of cold-looking farming lands, and traces of lead workings between the two Allens, as was our hap one sunny afternoon, the prospect of Whitfield, as we dropped down to it by several hundred feet of precipitous road, was delightful. For the steep green slopes of the vale here press together, as if to indicate the last stage of its existence, where vale changes to mountain glen, and the deep hollow is filled with the luxuriant foliage of ash, and oak, and beech, and sycamore, such as in a highland country only gather round some ancient country-seat. A graceful church spire springs high above the foliage between the thrusting hills, and one forgives its obvious lack of centuries in the distinction of its pose. The manor-house, an old seat of the Whitfields, who acquired the property from the Hexham monks, then of the Ords, and now of the Blackett Ords, is buried in the foliage.



For the rest, there is nothing but a few cottages and the mountain stream, fresh from its brief harbourage of woodland, rushing under a stone bridge. It was the Lord of Whitfield, it may be remembered, whom Hobbie Noble, that incorrigible freebooter of ballad fame, rejected even of Bewcastle, declared "loved him not."

"For nae gear frae me he e'er could keep."

Leaving Whitfield we ascended the vale by the quite excellent road that crosses the wild moors to Alston, some nine miles distant. It was an afternoon that will abide in my memory, for the complete and impressive solitude of nearly the whole route, and also for the fact that the road climbs steadily uphill without wavering for a moment, to the fifth milestone, to commence, almost immediately, a similar descent on the Cumbrian side. One of the loftiest and loneliest road passes in England is this, without a doubt. As we breasted the long hill from Whitfield the sunshine vanished, and gloomy clouds, though as yet sailing high, took possession of the sky and drove away the radiance that had hitherto lit up the hills and cast shadows over the vales. Our road crawled slowly up the long steep above the green but treeless glen below, in whose hollow we could see the bright streams of the West Allen rippling down from farm to farm till the last small modest homestead, with its stone wall enclosures, gave way to the wild. Long before we had touched the watershed we, too, were out on the heather among the uneasy grouse, and the intermittent bleat of Cheviot and blackfaced sheep. The inevitable arrays of butts, which in the last twenty or thirty years have come to strike a jarring note of civilization and artificiality on so many moorland scenes, were here and there. Elsewhere beneath the dull and now thickening clouds and the approach of evening, this expanse of primitive upland, which broke away to the south and east into rounded and cone-shaped heights, breathed feelingly in the breeze that whistled in the rushes of the spirit of solitude. We were virtually in the Pennine range,





for the moors around us rolled onward till they climbed the heights of Cross Fell, and looked right down upon the Lake country. As we topped the watershed, and began after no long time to dip westward, a quite striking downward view of the hill-girdled hollow, where Alston lay upon the infant streams of the South Tyne, was unfolded. Here I am sure we lost nothing by stormy skies and the approach of evening. None of those blunted but finely up-lifted masses of moor and mountain we looked across to were much over two thousand feet. In the sunshine they would only have been hills, if shapely and distinguished ones. In these angry skies and this atmospheric gloom, all tell-tale detail had vanished into imposing blurred and murky shapes, full of mystery, and as big to look at as Skiddaw or Helvellyn. Their tops, which from this angle were fairly bold, opened and shut in the racking clouds in quite the spirit of mountain peaks, and as we dropped steadily down the three miles descent to where Alston lay invisible, wedged in the hollow somewhere at their feet, they seemed to mount yet higher into the skies, till, without much warning, they vanished altogether in gloom, and we entered this sequestered haunt of ancient cattle-lifters and latter-day cattle-dealers and lead miners in heavy rain.

Alston is a Cumbrian town all over. Any one with the faintest intuition for such things coming out of Northumberland would see at once he was in another region, though actually but two miles over the Border. The austerity of the Northumbrian street is not here, for these are altogether more conciliatory, and even picturesque. Queer corners and even irregular gables confront you, and the whitewash brush, more popular with the Cumbrian, has dashed over many a house front, and at least dispelled monotony. My notions of Alston had been gathered wholly in Cumberland, where men talk of it as the end of all things Cumbrian, the eastern limit of Joe Bowman's most tremendous runs with his fell hounds from the Ullswater country; also the origin of many horse deals, creditable or otherwise, for there is a great fair at Alston.

I seem to hear the echoes too of various famous characters hailing from here, in the half-forgotten stories of certain racy Cumbrians, with whom I have fished and smoked and ranged the fells within years so recent that I felt ashamed of my haziness, now I was actually in a place about which I had always felt some curiosity. In a hasty stroll about Alston, a whiff of Keswick, Ambleside, and Penrith came through the now fast-falling rain, and it would not be libellous to suggest that the latter did not detract from such analogous features as there might be.

We were now, too, in the land of becks and fells; out of the Saxon, that is to say, and into the Norse country. There are plenty of fells, to be sure, in Northumberland, but they are nearly all along its western edge, and the Scandinavian settlements extended into Liddesdale. But there is only, I believe, one *beck*, to wit, that rather famous one, the Wansbeck, while, on the other hand, there are scarcely any *burns* in Cumberland. Nor can any word differ much more in the hearing than the *burr'n* of the Scotsman, and the *borch'n* of the Northumbrian, the "ch" here standing for a guttural, though with but partial accuracy, for the quite indescribable Northumbrian burr. One might well add, as a third variety, the burn of polite conventional speech which somehow always sounds a little foolish. Alston had been celebrating some mild function that day—a church bazaar, I think—and the rain had driven its supporters in some strength into the inn parlours, where both Cumbrian and Northumbrian speech, under the gentle stimulus of cheering tumblers, was much in evidence while we awaited our train to Haltwhistle and Hexham.

## CHAPTER XII

### NORTH TYNEDALE

"Save a fat horse and a fair woman,  
Twa bonnie dogs to kill a deer ;  
But England suld hae found me meat and mault,  
Gif I had lived this hunderd year."

*Johnnie Armstrong of Kilmachie.*

SIR FRANCIS NORTH, accompanying Lord Keeper Guilford on the northern circuit, gives a racy picture of Tynedale, and their progress through it. Infested as it is with cattle thieves, the Border justices hang at another rate altogether at their own commissions from the more judicial procedure of the assize. "Eighteen," he says, "were strung up on one single occasion, while a violent suspicion is next to conviction." At Newcastle assizes, during this circuit, a man named Noble was arraigned merely because an unknown horse had been seen grazing near his house, but was acquitted to the outspoken disgust of the country justices present, who said he deserved hanging "on general grounds," which they regarded, to North's somewhat amused amazement, as quite sufficient for so summary a procedure. While the judge was descanting on the entire lack of evidence, a Scottish gentleman and Border Commissioner on the bench, "made a long neck" towards him, and called out, "My Lord, send him to huzz, and ye'll nae see him mair." The Scottish verdict of "guilty on habit and repute" was good law across the Border. North goes on to say that as the Court journeyed to Hexham, the sheriff supplied them all with arms as well as with a knife and fork apiece. The road along the Tyne was "hideous for its sharp turns and precipices." If the

judicial coach had not been held up by main force, it would have toppled over. Finally, his lordship was forced to descend and take to the saddle. The tenants of the several manors were bound to guard the judges through their precincts, "but not a yard further would they go to save their souls; comical sort of people with long beards and cloaks, riding upon nags, as they call their small horses. Long broadswords with basket hilts, hanging in broad belts, their legs and swords almost touching the ground. Every one in turn came up, cheek by jowl, and talked with my Lord Judge, who was mightily pleased with their discourse, for they were great antiquarians in their own bounds." There is little fault to be found with the roads up Tynedale nowadays, while the descendants of the cattle thieves—a term applied to the nobler raider as well as the small operator—are prosperous stock farmers, of prodigious respectability, but not often antiquarians.

Chollerford, though five miles up the river, for physical reasons sufficiently obvious, was always regarded as the gate of North Tynedale. The judicial capital of the dale, however, from earliest times was Wark, a village yet seven miles higher up. The main road which follows the river is lifted above, and usually a little aloof from it, though here and there revealing fine stretches of water gleaming beneath pendent woods. This is as yet no moorland road, for the narrow winding dale is green with meadows, and sometimes draped in the woodlands that encompass famous and ancient seats. Haughton Castle is the first, rearing its hoary towers on a woody brow above the west bank of the river, while Chipchase further on lies back upon the opposite shore. Before reaching Haughton, too, from Chollerford we cross the Erringburn, hurrying down from the village of Errington, noteworthy as the nest of the famous Northumberland Catholic family of that name, who, within easy memory, were still seated at Beaufront. Haughton from its high wooded perch shows a fine expanse of grey tower and curtain, grim, suggestive, and unadorned. Though restored for habitation a full century

ago, it retains the outer shell, at any rate, of the fortress raised by William de Swineburn, treasurer to the Queen of Scotland in the thirteenth century, when North Tynedale owed allegiance to the Scottish Crown. Its walls are from eight to ten feet thick, and with its great size, its hoary massive corner towers, and uplifted situation, the mediæval character is finely maintained. Swinburnes and Widdringtons seem to have owned it for most of its active life. Among the innumerable smaller fortresses of that day it was the only actual castle towards Scotland, and the frequent duty of its owners was to keep an eye on the pele towers of their less important neighbours, who, if Jedburgh and Liddesdale did not seem for the moment raidable, were always prepared for a foray into Durham or south-east Northumberland. Many a moss-trooper has languished in its dungeons. A story runs concerning Sir William Swinburne, who, during the Border wars and turmoils of the sixteenth century, had captured a chief of the Armstrongs, and consigned him to subterranean durance. But himself summoned away to give evidence at the trial of Lord Dacre, an active warden of the Middle March who had fallen foul of Wolsey, he forgot all about the hapless Armstrong, and only remembered while he was at York that no orders had been given for feeding him. Seized with a remorse that was quite creditable for his situation and period, he hurried home again and rode with bloody spur and loose rein to Durham, where his horse fell dead under him. Mounting another he reached Haughton that night, only to discover the wretched riever a corpse, having gnawed some of the flesh from his own arm in the agonies of his hunger.

Chipchase, the ancient seat of the Herons, who, like the Swinburnes, were conspicuous as leaders throughout the whole tale of Border story, is three miles beyond and of altogether another type, though quite as interesting. Here we have the original Heron pele tower, and a very imposing one, a veritable keep in fact, tacked on to the most beautiful specimen of Jacobean manor-house in Northumberland, built by Cuthbert Heron in 1621. The old tower, which has been preserved by



its massive stone roof containing some flags six feet in length, has lost little but its battlements which projected some two feet on still perfect corbels. At each corner is a circular turret machicolated like the battlements for the better precipitating of boiling water and heavy stones on the besiegers' heads. In front of the pointed doorway the remains of the oak portcullis are still embedded : I believe the only instance of its kind in England. The adjoining manor-house must have been a unique spectacle when first erected in this wild country, and a matter of astonishment to the gentry of the pele towers above, "honest men all but for a little shifting for their living," as a contemporary play delicately puts it. Above the entrance is the Heron shield, carrying three of the long-necked birds whose name the family bear. Above the porch is a stone bear, and elsewhere are many others holding the shields, much obliterated by time, of various Northumbrian stocks. Some kind of a manor-house had been built out from the tower before the beautiful Jacobean building that we see before us now was raised by Cuthbert Heron. For in the sixteenth century this castle was regarded as the most roomy garrison for the fifty light horsemen that acted in normal times as a kind of mounted police under the keeper of Tyne-dale, who was frequently a Heron or a Swinburne.

A mile or two beyond Chipchase the road strides the river by an unromantic iron bridge to Wark, an ancient and substantial little village, whose former importance as the centre of the law in a lawless country has stimulated those curious legends of far-extended vanished streets, and a great population, that survived in so many places of the kind. The Mote-hill near by is thought to have been the scene of legislation in Saxon times, but it is of quite sufficient interest to know that the Scottish justices in the thirteenth century sat here, whose reports, as already mentioned, are still in the Record Office. The late Dr. Charlton collated and printed many of these, and to lovers of the past they are intensely interesting, telling how land was cultivated, what rents were paid who were the principal people, and of what like were all their

small disputes, and how flowed the minor current of their daily lives outside the stir and turmoil of its more serious exploits. In these early days we find the de Bellinghams, now represented by the Castle Bellingham family in Ireland, sheriffs of Tynedale and the chief magnates of the county. Next came the Swinburnes, who still own property here, and the Charltons, the chief of the four greynes of North Tynedale, who also, of course, are still here.

De Bellingham, in these records, is at continual odds with the Abbot of Jedworth or the Prior of Hexham, in the matter of boundaries, grazing rights, or the like, on account of his negligence in keeping fences in repair and ditches open. The clerics complain that their stock in consequence stray on to his land, whereupon he instantly impounds them. De Bellingham retaliates by summoning them to show cause why he should not graze two mares and their foals for two years in the abbot's park at Ellingham, as the right had been granted him in the late King Henry's time. The disputes are at length settled by a long and most precise agreement, given here verbatim. Another suit, as curious, is a right held from his grandfather by a plaintiff of pasturing his flocks just so far beyond the Timbershaw burn as they could return from in a single day, but not of spending the night there.

John of Hawelton and Thomas of Thirlwall are arraigned for a much more serious business, namely, that of plundering the town of Wark of thirty-nine oxen, eighteen cows, fifteen other cattle, and two hundred sheep, and driving them to the former's park at Sewingshields on the wall, and there detaining them against the king's peace.

Townships where robberies occurred were bound to pursue the offenders with hue and cry, and several entries occur where for failure in this they are "placed at the mercy of the Crown." There are entries even then of private raids from Scotland, William de Fenwick of Simonburn losing all his cattle thus, and being himself bound. Some other reivers, having rifled the house of Robert Unthank in his absence, shut up his daughter in a chest to avoid pursuit. Several

clergymen were convicted of burglary and cattle stealing. There were odd names about here, too: Adam Aydrunken, for instance, upset his boat in the Tyne, and accidentally drowned his wife Beatrice. Cecilia, the wife of John Unkuthman (uncouthman), cut her throat with a razor. Perhaps she could no longer stand his manners or bear the weight of her married name. Another unfortunate person figures as Adam-with-the-nose. The coroner was a great autocrat, and frequently executed prisoners as well as sat on their bodies. Sometimes communities dispensed even with this officer, and decapitated malefactors before his arrival, being then "placed at the mercy of the Crown." Even deaths by accident are carefully reported, and there are many cases of punishment for fishing in other people's waters without leave, and for killing salmon in the close season, which was strictly laid down. The suits concerning disputed lands, too, are frequent. One man, again, was imprisoned by the owners of a dog for shooting it with an arrow in self-defence, and claiming damages for such detention, got ten marks. There are a great many murder cases recorded. Most of the culprits fly the country, upon which their goods are confiscated, but when caught they are decapitated. Here are some of them: Thomas Spalefot, John Dulphin-the-drit, Elyas Blessedblod, and William Titmouse. The names of individuals are returned from time to time who were frozen to death on the moors. The parson of Corbridge was convicted of burglary and imprisoned at Wark, but he escaped, and took sanctuary at Simonburn; whereupon his brother parson of Warden, ashamed of his cloth no doubt, handed him over to the Bishop of Durham, in whose prison he died. How anybody lived in a mediæval prison, even a bishop's, is a marvel. So much for the quieter and purely domestic side of life in Tynedale during Edward the First's reign. The Manor of Wark belonged to the Radcliffes prior to the 'fifteen, who built a house long vanished on the Mote-hill.

Half a mile from the village, at Houxtys on the Bellingham Road, Mr. Abel Chapman, author, among other works,

of "Bird Life of the Borders," and well known as a naturalist, sportsman, wild-fowler, and big game hunter, is seated in a house full of trophies from lands remote. The Tyne, still a broad and lusty river with the dark hue of the peat moss just tinging its clear streams, sweeps out of the Duke's woods below the confluence of the Rede, and curves finely round the meadows below the house; while the Houxy burn, a lusty stream from the moors, comes pouring down through pine woods beside it. There is no doubt about the salmon in the North Tyne, two or three favourite pools, within sight of the windows, yield their annual tribute; and, indeed, for twenty odd miles up from its mouth at Warden, to Falstone, beyond Bellingham, the salmon fishing is everywhere excellent when the water is right. The bull trout too, the *salmo eriox*, running sometimes to five or six pounds, or even more, loves the North Tyne, and, indeed, affects North-umbrian rivers more generally than those of any other county. As for the brown trout, he too flourishes as in so perfect a river, well preserved almost from its source to its mouth, he should do. April is his month of action, however, and the March brown his special fancy. No rise, even of Mayfly in a chalk stream, provokes the scene of orgie that the smaller insect, with its mottled brown wings, occasions in the first fortnight of April on the mountain rivers that hatch it freely, for the obvious reason that the fish are smaller, more hungry, and much more numerous. Here, too, on the hill slope, and in the valley, the owner has planted and contrived little harbourages for the better inducement of rarer birds to set up house in the breeding season. From here to Bellingham, four miles beyond, the road still keeps to the west bank of the river, though rising and falling over the hill slopes at some height above the valley. The landscape, too, begins to expand. The wild moorland, which has hitherto been more or less concealed by the bosky entanglements of an old river-side habitation, now shows up its long ridges and rounded summits on every skyline. Far below, among the valley foliage, is Lee Hall, where poor Mr. Lowes of

Willimoteswyke, it may be remembered, was chained to his captor and rival's kitchen fireplace. Just beyond it, in more woods, is Reedsmouth, where a Charlton is still seated, and the little railway that follows up the east bank of the North Tyne from Hexham, on its long, tortuous route through the passes to Scotland, throws out a branch which climbs hence, away over the moors to Rothbury. Here, too, as the name implies, the Rede of bloody memory, and renowned in Border song and story, drops quietly, with innocent prattle, over its narrow stoney bed into the Tyne, a little harmless-looking trout stream across which one may with ease cast a fly.

But from up here on the highway, which shoots onward now through many-acred bare enclosures, screened betimes by belts of fir, and lying at the feet of moors, these details are muffled from sight in the abundance of their own foliage. The eye is carried forwards, rather, to where Bellingham, the modern successor of Wark, in the metropolitan honours of North Tynedale, lies picturesquely in the heart of the vale two miles away. The crossing of the lofty stone bridge of four arches that lifts the highway over the river into the outskirts of the little town, would at once predispose any one in its favour. For the Tyne, expanded here to a breadth of perhaps eighty yards, comes smoothly down out of fringing woods, and, stirred into life by the many buttresses of the bridge, hurries onward with broken surface, beneath still hanging woods on one side, and grass paddocks and orchards on the other. I had stood here a fortnight previously, and watched a half-flood hurling ten feet of black water from bank to bank against these same buttresses. But that was in mid-August, and it was the last of the month when I shifted my abode to the pastoral seclusion of Bellingham, and what proved to be a long autumn drought had just set in. The gravelly bottom was plain enough now beneath the dimpled amber streams. It was the week, too, of the full harvest moon, and we strolled out betimes when night and quiet had sunk upon the mild stir of the village half a mile away. Here, leaning on the central parapet of the lofty bridge, we could watch

the moonlight streaming over one-half of the mysterious surface of the waters, throwing their woodland screen into black relief against the sky, or the distant moors, now relit with almost the refulgence of day. For deep and shallow at this hour know no difference; all alike were a mere mirror for the play of the moonlight, or the sullen shadow of the woods. At intervals a salmon, or bull trout, impatient, no doubt, of the shrinking waters that checked his upward progress, would fling himself into the darkness somewhere below, and fall again with a resounding splash; or, anon, some complaining sheep, just driven from distant mountain pastures to the cramped quarters of a butcher's paddock, would wake again the echoes of the still and breathless night.

Bellingham itself is a cheerful little oasis in the waste, though not, of course, so lively as in the brave days of old when all the honest men around "did a little shifting for their living," and were the despair of kings, commissioners, and march wardens. It is no more than a considerable village straggling around open spaces and along a wide street which, together with its beautiful situation, makes it, if not precisely picturesque, extremely suggestive and characteristic. It is full of dogs, and generally more or less full of sheep—that useful animal in this country holding an easy lead in its interests and products. There is one excellent inn, at least, equal to any reasonable demands of bed and board, and a wonderful little old church of eleventh-century date. There is a mound, too, outside the village, on which stood the keep of the Bellinghams who, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, one suspects kept better order in North Tynedale than was known for the next few centuries, when the "four greynes" had it more to themselves. The Hareshaw burn runs through the village, and just outside it emerges from a wooded gorge which, after a mile or two of beautiful windings through a ravine clad in foliage, ends in a quite respectable waterfall, where the stream plunges from the open moor into a basin surrounded by curious plateaus of limestone overhung by cavernous cliffs. This two-mile

walk would make the fortune of any accessible haunt. If such a place were physically possible in the Isle of Wight or Surrey, it would be regarded as a prodigious natural asset, and would have been celebrated in acres of print. Bellingham, which does a mild tourist business in the shape of a brake or two from Hexham now and again, has cut a path to Hareshaw linn, and it figures largely in the guide-books and on picture postcards. This prejudiced me against it, not because I doubted its merits, but from the fact that wooded gorges of beauty, rapids, and waterfalls are common to all mountain streams towards their source, and familiar, though none the less endeared, to those who frequent such waters. But I prefer those that have not paths made up them on account of their propinquity to places where their inspection plays a merely incidental part between sumptuous feasts for the wonderment of persons who, unfamiliar with the mazes of mountain streams, hold these spots as special freaks of nature. But the Hareshaw dene, though with no pretensions to grandeur, as a pure study in foliage and tumbling water for a prolonged distance, is quite exquisite, and though it has a path furnished with rustic bridges contrived up it, being otherwise impenetrable with dry feet, I doubt if there is anything better of the kind in any of the beautiful burns that feed the North Tyne. Moreover, the linn which brings the pilgrim to a halt at its upper limit falls through a gap in a precipice of some hundred feet high into a sunless pool, girt about with beetling walls of rock hollowed by Nature into fantastic caverns, and feathered far above against the skyline with birch and rowan, witch-elm, oak, and ash.

Bellingham, by the way, like all place-names of similar termination in the north-east from the Firth of Forth to the Tyne, is pronounced Bellinjam. This is held as a mark of pure Anglo-Saxon occupation, and practically ceases on touching the Scandinavian settlements of Durham, Cumberland, and part of Roxburghshire. In ancient documents such places are often actually spelt with a "j." Bellingham church, dedicated to St. Cuthbert, is a wonderful little relic of Norman

art, dating from the close of the eleventh century. It has no tower, but its west end is sheared up by two huge buttresses. Its roof, however, is its glory, being, I believe, unique, and consisting of heavy flags of stone laid on stone ribs, for nothing inflammable was of the least use in ancient Bellingham. The interior is quite plain, with narrow Norman windows in the thick walls, and a small chantry to the Bellingham family. The churchyard lies finely poised above the Tyne, which riots on a rugged bed beneath, while exposing glimpses of the quieter stretch above, with the grey arches of the bridge and the abounding foliage behind and around it shadowed on the stream. Here are mortuary slabs and monuments of generation after generation of Riddleys, Robsons, Dodds, Hedleys, Halls, Dixons, Nicholsons, Charltons, and occasionally some other one. As almost everywhere in Northumberland, the later Georgian passion is strong here for decorating tombs with the heads of either truculent or inane cherubims, and yet more with crude representations of hour-glasses, scissors, hammers, crossbones, and such other emblems of the occupant's trade, or of the brief tenure and uncertainty of mortal life, is conspicuous. Bellingham church has seen some strange things in its eight centuries of existence. Its little chancel was twice gutted by the Scots, while the nave was constantly used as a fortress. In the time of Queen Anne, William Charlton, of the Bower and Reedsmouth, a somewhat heady and prominent squire, usually known as "Bowrie," found himself constrained to absence from divine service for a cause in which grim humour, if such it were, was carried beyond the limit of endurance. For it so happened that Bowrie and one of the Widdringtons fell into a grand quarrel over a horse at a race-meeting held near Bellingham, and adjourned to settle their differences at a spot still pointed out close to the village. Bowrie there slew his opponent, and then rode for his life to a friend's house near Warden, where he lay concealed, though ultimately receiving the queen's pardon. In the mean time they had buried his victim, not merely inside Bellingham



church, but before Bowrie's pew door, under the inscription, "The Burial-place of Henry Widdrington, of Rutland, gentleman, who was killed by William Charlton, of Reedsmonth, Feb. 23, 1711." It is there yet, but decently obscured by some later alterations in the pews. Bowrie, of course, could never again come to church, as may be readily imagined. He went out in the 'fifteen, and remained so staunch a Jacobite that his friends got him imprisoned as a precaution before the 'forty-five. He left no legitimate children, but three natural daughters, who seem to have been well reared, however, as Catholics and decently endowed. For in 1780, on the relaxation of the penal laws, when George the Third was first prayed for in the Catholic chapels, the old ladies at the first utterance of the prayer at once left the chapel at Hexham—a manœuvre they regularly executed to the end of their lives. A letter extant in the family, says Bowrie's collateral descendant Dr. Charlton, alludes to him as "all wayes vearry a-Bousiffe and scornful to his brother of Heleyside and would a-made him foudelled and sould him deare Bargains and abused him when he had done."

Speaking of sword play, one of the Milburnes having fallen out with some party of another name, they had stripped to their shirts with a view to fighting it out, according to custom, in the main street of Bellingham, when the first-named called to his wife, "Wife, bring me a clean sark, it sall niver be said that the bluid o' the Milburnes ran down upon foul linen." There is no burking the fact that the hardy people of the North Tyne and Rede were commonly known and generally recorded in official communications as "The thieves of Tynedale." Even when a muster of the north for a descent on Scotland is particularized on paper, both horse and foot from here are scheduled under the heading of "Tynedale thieves." In the sixteenth century, the North Tyne alone, from Wark to Falstone, then the limit of habitation, and not over a dozen miles in length, could turn out two hundred horse and four hundred foot armed with steel cap, jack or breastplate, spear and sword, and never

anywhere in the world, I suppose, were horse and foot more ready to turn out on the slightest provocation. If such a label on an army list sounds jocosely libellous, we may remember that the Highland clans were classified by their lowland neighbours in precisely the same uncomplimentary fashion. It may be even doubted if such a definition were held in any sort of dishonour, or sounded to the Tynedaler as it reads to us now in cold print. Lord Macaulay roused great and just indignation in North Tynedale for representing the conditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as still existing there, and of the people as savages, "Within the memory of living men," whereas the disarmament of the country after the 'fifteen is a reasonable landmark from which to date a general acquiescence in law and order. Prior to that the burgesses of Newcastle were from time to time forbidden to take apprentices from these dales, so great was the fear of them.

Sir Robert Bowes' survey of 1542 is a well-known and valuable account of the country. "The houses," he says, "were much set on either side of the North Tyne and other little brooks descending into it, in strong places, by nature of the ground, and of mosses and morasses. The narrow glens had been further strengthened by the trunks of trees thrown across them, and the headsmen of them have very strong houses, the outer walls of great swair oak trees strongly bound together with great tenons of the same, so thickly morticed that it will be hard without great labour to cast down any of the said houses; walls and roofs covered with turf and earth, so they will rarely burn. In such places, almost inaccessible, the said Tindaills do much rejoice and embolden themselves."

He goes on to say that a number of houses would be set together, so that an attack on one may warn all the residue, "upon any scrimmage made within any part of Tyndaill, forthwith the outcry is so raised both by men and women, that the country will be warned and assembled to know the cause thereof, and if it be a quarrel of any one of them against a true man, pursuing after his goods, spoiled or

stolen, they will take one part and maintain such cause as a common matter, so that for dread of this almost, no man dare follow his goods into the said country of Tyndaill." Few small stone towers or pele houses, afterwards so numerous, had yet apparently been erected above Chipchase.

In a second report, eight years later, he enlarges still further on the wildness, disorders, and misdemeanours of the "North Tyndaills." He admits that there were certain headsmen of the sundry "greynes" who did not steal themselves, but they protected those who did, and received part of the stolen goods, and, in short, did everything to prevent the king's writ having any effect whatever. If any true men in England could track their goods into Tyne or Redesdale, Bowes writes that they would always prefer to compound for a partial return of them than to proceed to extremities, for if a thief of any great name or "kindred were executed, the whole of his name put the suitor at deadly feud," or, in other words, his life was not worth a month's purchase.

In the same century Lord Dacre, who was for a time Keeper of Tynedale, writes long letters to Wolsey, of these irrepressible reivers of Tyne and Rede, quaint and almost pathetic apologies for his impotency to capture these elusive and audacious souls, who "commit haynous murders, robberies and ryottes," they attack his servants, and rescue those of their kin he has succeeded in capturing, and it is affirmed, so he declares, that "some gentlemen are the doers, and some the receivers of the said detestable actes." Even after he had succeeded in arresting "ten persons of the moost princepall and chefe in Redeshall," and locked them up in the castle of Harbottle on the Coquet, and then with the bailiffs of the Shire and eighty of his own horsemen essayed to remove them to Rothbury, his force was set upon, the bailiff of Morpeth and many others killed, the prisoners rescued and carried off to Scotland. The Bishop of Carlisle, too, writes to Wolsey: "There is more theft and extortion by English thieves than by all the Scots in Scotland." After enumerating the woes of low-lying, Cumberland, he declares it is worse

at Hexham, where, every market day, a hundred strong thieves are in attendance, and though the poor men and gentlemen see them that did rob them, they neither dare complain of them by name nor say one word to them. "They take all ther cattell and horse, their corn as they carrye yt to sow, or to the mill to grynde, and at the houses they bedd them delyver what they have, or they shall be fyred and bornt."

The great Earl of Surrey, the victor of Flodden, writes to Henry the Eighth a long list of outrages, "mooste humble beseeching your Grace too loke upon this pore countre which by the contynell murders and theftes comitted by Tyndale and Ridsdale men and others of Northumberland was neer brought to utter confusion." The king, partly no doubt as a distraction and carrying on a sort of informal feud with Scotland, let loose the dales like greyhounds from the leash over the Scottish border under Sir Ralph Fenwick of Wallington and Sir William Heron of Chipchase.

It was now King James the Fifth's turn to anathematize our Bellingham friends in more quaint and querulous Saxon. "The greatest of all attemptes," he writes, "done against our lieges during the hell war has been committed upon our middle Marches by certaine Zoure legys of the surnames of Dodds, Charltons and Milburnes under the care of Schir Rauf Fenwick." But the dalesmen that followed Fenwick so readily against their hereditary foe, turned on him a few months later without the slightest hesitation, when he came with eighty horsemen and occupied Tasset Tower, just above Bellingham, with a view to capturing a misbehaving Ridley. William Charlton on this occasion, with two hundred men, "sworne uppon a book always to take hys parte," set on Fenwick with his royal garrison and "chased him out of Tynedaill to his greate reproache."

Lord Dacre, however, swiftly revenged this insult to the king, and seizing several Charltons and Robsons, executed some of them at Bellingham, an act with which the king was more pleased, Wolsey wrote, than anything Dacre had yet done.

Later on we find the men of the Tyne and Rede combining with some of their Scottish neighbours and enemies of Liddesdale in a big raid through Northumberland to the very gates of Newcastle, firing towns, killing many people, and driving away every animal that could walk. This was insupportable for even those times. The proclamation is preserved which Ralph Fenwick, bailiff of Tynedale under Lord Dacre's orders, then Warden of the Middle March, delivered at Bellingham, enjoining every man in the dale to appear at Wark and give security on peril of his life. The thunders of the Church, too, were invoked upon them; for Wolsey laid an interdict on the Tynedale churches, and the Archbishop of Glasgow did the like for Liddesdale, and excommunicated the more enterprising of its inhabitants. The archbishop's language was calculated to congeal the blood of the doughtiest riever who had any fear of God left in him. He prayed that "all the malesouns and waresouns that ever gat warldie creatur sen the begynning of the warlde to this hour mot licht apon yaim." After this and many other gruesome anticipations his Grace goes on to curse the Borderers' heads, the hairs of their heads, their face, their eyes, their mouth, their nose, their tongue, their teeth, their breast, their heart, their stomach, their belly, their back, their arms, their legs, their hands, and, to resume the vernacular, "their feet and every ilk part of their body, fra the top of their heid to the soile of their feit, before and behind, within and without."

But even this had but a fleeting effect on the audacious dalesmen. They brought in Scottish friars who administered the sacrament to the unrepentant raiders in their interdicted churches, regardless of prelates, Scottish or English; while in a few months Tyne and Liddesdale were acting in concert again and burning Tarsset Tower, the official headquarters. This brought Fenwick down again, but only to another disaster, while soon afterwards we find Charltons and Dodds riding a raid into Durham in company with Scottish Armstrongs and Nobles. They were captured, however, and





A MOORLAND STREAM

hung in chains on Haydon bridge and at Hexham, Alnwick, and Newcastle. The chase was exciting on this occasion to the pursuing men from the Wear and Tees, and was only successful as the South Tyne had risen in flood, Haydon bridge being chained up as usual in such emergencies.

A quarter of an hour's walk in either direction from Bellingham will bring you up on to the moors. Indeed, these are so close that the sound of the sportman's gun in early autumn is a familiar note in the rural chorus of the valley, the bleat of sheep, the barking of colley dogs, the shout of dusty drovers, the cry of pewits, the sound of rushing waters, and at long intervals the rumble of a North British train making for Hawick or Hexham. Mounting the heathery ridge to the south of the valley, you are on the edge of and look all over the same billowy wilderness that we saw surging up against the Roman wall, and can follow in the dim distance the long rampart that carries the latter from Sewing-shields to the Nine Nicks of Thirlwal. Most nights of the two weeks we sojourned in Bellingham, the sun set in a blaze of glory, and when not further afield we sought these hill-tops on one or other side of the dale where we could watch it sink behind the wild, uplifted horizon that roughly marks the Scottish border, and note the sombre tones of twilight gradually spreading their grey mantle over the waste of moors till these were dark enough to rekindle slowly beneath the whiter light and paler radiance of the moon. Surely at such times as this, indeed at all times, the fascination of a Border country holds one with extraordinary force.

I sometimes think it almost unfits one for complete enjoyment of any other, provided, that is to say, a country-side means something more than a subject for the camera or the paint-box. By a Border country I do not mean merely the line of the Tweed, the Solway, or the Wye. Most of Scotland, all Wales, and all Ireland are Border countries eloquent of the clash of contending races within recorded and comparatively recent times, and all that such means. Blankshire, in the days



of Saxon, Dane, and Briton, beyond a doubt, had a stirring time ; but it does not look like it, and in truth the period is rather dim and voiceless. Blankshire wears an air of positive indifference, produced by some eight hundred years of comparative domesticity rudely broken at long intervals, but scarcely ever by blood or race feuds. The more peaceful past is strong in architecture, to be sure, but the atmosphere suggests nothing but ages of tranquillity. The prehistoric on the chalk downs of Wiltshire seems much more alive than the historic in modern Blankshire, which may stand for most English counties. But I am not speaking of the prehistoric, which is altogether another thing. There are mediæval castles assuredly, and some very fine ones, that have certainly stood a siege or two in mediæval civil broils or later, but they suggest in the main the mere overawing of a well-behaved and comparatively unwarlike peasantry, and the names of great nobles who did their fighting in these other Border countries or in lands over sea. They contribute little but their hoary carcases to the romance or literature of the actual soil they were raised on, for the sufficient reason that the soil has not been congenial to retaining their significance. Its occupants, in short, seldom gave them sufficient occasion to justify their imposing presence. We all know, of course, that their owners, and sometimes their enemies, found them extremely useful. But these occasional incidents were not much concerned with local patriotism or its enemies, and have left no trace to speak of in local song or story. Happy, however, is the castle, if we may paraphrase the familiar adage, that has no history, or we should rather say, in this case, are its dependents. No proletariat in Europe has been so little harried by war or suffering of any kind as that of Blankshire. Hence, no doubt, their touching and complacent faith that they never will be, and their latter-day aversion to defensive weapons. But by way of illustrating what, for need of a better word, may be called the glamour of the Border atmosphere, one might without prejudice conceive of some wight, keenly alive to the voices of the past, who should cross

the Severn sea from, in this sense, the fairly resounding hills and valleys of Glamorgan, Brecon, or Carmarthen, to the opposite shore. Here, on Exmoor and Dartmoor, which nowadays seem to loom so large in the public eye, he will find the physical conditions of South Wales in a modified form with Mr. Blackmore's Doones in full possession of the one, and the Pixies apparently of the other! The former had not been invented when I lived in their neighbourhood as a boy, and at the best are poor sort of heroes for a country that really looks as if things ought to have happened there. Dartmoor still more suggests a stage for high romance, but the furniture and the actors seem lacking. It is not easy to call Neolithic man out of his mounds, unless perhaps on Salisbury Plain, and, moreover, he is everywhere like the Pixies and the Tylwyth teg.

Between the trackless moorland the green vale of Tyne winds its gradually contracting course for a score of miles towards the Scottish border and the lonely glens of Kielder and Deadwater. But there is a good deal of life yet upon both banks of the river, if of a more peaceful kind than that which went upon the war-path six hundred strong. Two miles above Bellingham, girt about with big timber and throwing belts of fir-wood up the moors behind, is Hesleyside, the principal seat of the Charltons, who succeeded the de Bellinghams in the early fourteenth century. The house is modern, and the original tower, a large and strong one resembling Halton, was pulled down about a century ago, having been built when the Charltons came into possession. One of its owners fought at Agincourt; more than two centuries later another raised a troop of horse for King Charles, was created a baronet, and temporarily lost his estates. Between Agincourt and the civil wars, however, the old fortalice at Hesleyside must have witnessed strange things, for its owners, though men in authority, were not loathe to change sides when it seemed profitable, as we have seen. Hesleyside is particularly associated with the well-known tradition of the dish consisting of a pair of spurs

that was placed on the table by the chatelaine, as a hint that the larder was empty.

Just across the Tyne is Charlton, another ancient seat of the clan, now a farmhouse. The river curves in shimmering shallows or in dark salmon pools from edge to edge of the level pastures, where cattle or dairy cows, of the shorthorn persuasion mostly, and probably Irishmen, are feeding, though this is in the main a land of sheep—blackface and Cheviot, half-bred or Border Leicester. The holdings, too, are mostly large, some immense, and the holders dwell in roomy stone houses that have often character and even a picturesqueness not common, as we have seen, to the larger Northumbrian homestead. The stern grey fronts have been here and there submitted to the embrace of creepers, and age has mellowed the walls which enclose the flower garden or orchard, and clothed them with moss or gillyflowers. Fragments of the adjoining moorland already trench betimes upon the roadside, pleasant braes of fern and heather strewn about with mossy crags and clumps of birch or stunted oak or straggling rowan trees. At Tarsset two large burns join the Tyne upon opposite banks—that of Chirdon from the south, and Tarsset from the north. On a knoll near the mouth of the latter stand the scant traces of the castle, already spoken of as the headquarters of the king's troops, and the scene of Sir Robert Fenwick's discomfiture. It is said to have belonged at one time to the Red Comyn, of Badenock, slain by Robert Bruce. This is a warm spot, for up the Tarsset burn dwelt all sorts of strenuous souls—the Milburnes particularly. One of that greyne, known as Barty of the Combe, occupied a small pele, the remains of which are extant on a tributary of the Tarsset known as the Black burn, which near its confluence takes a fine jump over a little precipice. Barty Milburne is immortal in connection with his friend Corbit Jack, who was perched in another tower higher up the burn. These worthies lived in the reign of Dutch William, though it may be fairly doubted if they knew it at the time, and the first-named awoke one fine morning to find that some stealthy Scots had made a

clean sweep of his sheep. So summoning his friend and neighbour, the two set off on the trail of the rievvers, and tracked them as far as Carter Fell, where the adjoining valley of the Rede near its source comes out of Scotland. Here they lost the track, and, following the usual Border custom, proceeded to indemnify themselves from the best Scottish flock they knew of in the neighbourhood. Having cut out the choicest sheep and started for home, the inevitable sequence, in the shape of a couple of indignant proprietors, overtook them above the waterfall known as Chattlehope Spout. In the mortal combat which as inevitably followed, Corbit Jack was slain and Barty wounded in the thigh. With a tremendous backhanded blow, however, the Tarset hero caught one Scotsman so clean on the neck that he "garred his heid spring along the heather like an onion." Of the other he made short work, and was thus left alone among the dead. Barty, however, though himself wounded, took his friend's body on his back, and driving the sheep in front of him, reached home with mingled feelings of sorrow and triumph, depositing the corpse in the hands of the widow, and replacing his own flock with a fresh strain.

This wild corner had a war-cry of its own—

"Tarret and Tarset head,  
Hard and heather bred,  
Yet—yet—yet——"

and within the last century I am told that many a head has been cracked at Bellingham fair under its inspiring strains. With all these tales running in our mind, we wandered some miles up the Tarset, till its narrow fringe of ancient but scanty settlement, with a modern shooting-box or two, and their inevitable fir plantations, at length filtered out into the moors and mosses that rise to the western rampart of Redesdale. Thence we swerved away over the high ridges that form the eastern wall of the North Tyne, through wastes of rank moorland grass, lit here and there by bright patches of heather and traversed by belts of quaking and spongy moss,

whence an occasional snipe would dash away with a scrawk, and vary the frequent note of wild-rising grouse, who share with the black-faced sheep the chief dominion of these hills. There was a tremendous wind blowing on that day beneath a bright sun, and the ragged surface of the moors, where not stiffened with heather, tossed like a ripening hay-crop, and the shadows of the lighter clouds rioted over this trackless, untrammelled borderland.

We dropped down again to the North Tyne at Falstone, where the valley becomes deep and trough-like, its floor but a meadow's breath, and the river, robbed since Tarsset of two lusty feeders, an altogether more modest, though perhaps more noisy, stream. Just above the stone bridge, which here spans its chafing currents with much less effort than the mightier structure at Bellingham, and set amid a pleasant harbour of foliage, is the hamlet of Falstone, with the last Anglican church towards the Scottish border. The latter is unnoteworthy, a small edifice of reasonable age with a castellated tower, though a Runic cross of some note was discovered here, and carried away by the Society of Antiquaries, in whose rooms at Newcastle it may be seen. It is engraved to the memory of one Hroethbert, or Robert, by a dutiful nephew, and an antiquarian member of one of the four greynes sees evidence here of a Robson (Robertson) in the seventh century, if not himself a raider, at any rate the ancestor of generations of wight-riders.

In the leafy graveyard, above the stream, lie more Hedleys, Robsons, Dodds, Dixons, and Telfers, and more hammers, scissors, pickaxes, and crossbones, decorating their simple headstones. A Presbyterian church reminds one how naturally strong that body is in these dales, where not only is there frequent intercourse with similar regions across the Border, but a great deal of actual Scottish blood. Through here, too, is said to pass the line where the Northumbrian burr gives way to a more Scottish pitch of voice and intonation. And if the Scotch carrier has long ceased to be a familiar figure, we met a pedlar of that nation staggering cheerfully

along through the solitude beneath a most prodigious pack of merchandise.

But returning for a moment to the mouth of the Tarsset, four miles below, the Chirdon burn, as I mentioned before we left the river in pursuit of Barty of the Combe, joins the Tyne from the south at the same point, cutting through the low pasture lands of Snapdough. The Chirdon is one of the best trouting burns running into the North Tyne, and together with this portion of the latter being in friendly hands, I explored its recesses, and followed it up the moors in the bed of the stream, rod in hand. Now, there were two or three days in that September hotter than anything I have ever felt in an English country-side. I know very well what real heat is like, and have been out in it all day and every day, summer after summer, for several years, and had no particular objection to it. I have only twice or thrice felt anything at all resembling such conditions in this country in the course of my life, which is natural enough, as there is no similarity whatever between  $95^{\circ}$  and  $80^{\circ}$  in the shade, which last qualified warmth causes thankless Britons to deck themselves in tropical costumes, and retire to quite unnecessary inactivity in shady places and discuss the temperature in superlatives wholly inapplicable to any British one. Those 48 hours of September, however, touched real heat, and brought back to me sensations long forgotten. People may talk about a damp heat, or a dry heat, or a trying heat, or vary in sensations of lassitude, but the actual power of the sun will be accurately recorded on the thermometer; and any one who has ever had cause to experience the various degrees of heat in the nineties, and distinguish between them, will recognize the quite un-English force the sun assumes on entering that decade. I knew we were in it, incredible though it seemed, at 700 feet above sea-level, in the midst of the Northumbrian moors, and was not surprised to hear that the thermometer in Bellingham had touched  $92^{\circ}$ —a figure, I question, if it ever had touched before. Not a breath of air was stirring; the very dogs had ceased to bark, the sheep to bleat. A sheet seemed almost too much covering during

those two nights—an experience for me unprecedented in these islands. On the South Tyne we had been buffeted by wind and storm ; at Bellingham, this very home of the tempest, I was to be reminded of Julys in remote Virginia. I do not know whether it was the memory of clear water worming for trout in the mountains of that beautiful country that inspired me to a like enterprise up the Chirdon burn, but it seemed the coolest and pleasantest method of spending a really fiery day ; for on such days, or on others approximating to them it is a mistake to think that the tops of low mountains or moors are cool. They are as warm as the valleys, and their beauty is destroyed by the heat haze. Fly fishing on attenuated streams in such a month would have been ridiculous, but the worm is another matter, and under these conditions quite a scientific lure. But, unfortunately, I had no supply of selected worms snugly scouring in moss, and I own I did not feel like digging them in the blaze of my landlady's vegetable garden. She undertook, however, to find a boy, and in due course returned with a scanty store of assorted specimens (worms) in a mustard-tin. I expressed a hope that the energies of the Bellingham urchin, diverted for the moment from the third standard, were not exhausted, and that he could brace himself to a further effort. Then, to my concern, the good, hard-working soul admitted that no boys were in evidence, and that she had dug them herself. This was too much ; so, filled with shame and remorse, I seized the spade and completed the task. I have had, I dare say, as ample an experience of rural landladies as most people (not the watering-place variety). I should like to write an article, nay, a book on them, and it would be almost wholly in their praise, not, I admit, as cooks, but as honest, worthy souls, a credit to their sex and to humanity. But I never had one that dug bait for me before, and that, too, by stealth, with the thermometer in the nineties !

The sprightly waters of the Chirdon burn, shrunken though they were, proved a retreat cool enough at least for me, the formality of waders being under such conditions

dispensed with. The willows and the alders, the rowan and the birch, stretched their topmost sprays across the stream till they met betimes above one's head, and tempered the smart of the midday sun, while the air that always rises from chafing waters further mitigated the conditions beneath which the unaccustomed folk of these uplands, and, indeed, of all England, groaned that day.

Casting a worm upstream in clear water, and so manipulating it as to catch trout, is an art to itself. So attenuated had the Chirdon burn become under a brief fortnight of sunshine, that it was here a very high art indeed, in spite of the fact that after a time the stream emerged upon the open moor, and shook off most of the protecting foliage amid which a worm on a full line is even more difficult to cast and to work than a fly. But wherever there were reasonable opportunities, the Chirdon trout showed that the abnormal temperature had not at any rate destroyed their appetite. I defied a second hot morning in some of the broad and shallower streams of the North Tyne itself, and got several really nice fish, running up to a pound in weight. By Chirdon burn, standing on a knoll above a picturesque water-mill at the edge of the moor, are the foundations of Dally Castle. What mediæval chief lived here I know not, but I fished up higher, within sight of the Bower, where once dwelt that Bowery Charlton, who, it will be remembered, was permanently scared away from Bellingham church by the prospect of saying his prayers in perpetuity on the tombstone of the man he had killed. Long before that, one Hector Charlton had lived here in this cleft of the moors, whose reputation as a prince of thieves reached Wolsey; for his system was to catch rievers, and then release them for a share of the plunder. This gentleman went all lengths, for when Bellingham church and other churches were interdicted, he threw them open and performed the rites himself, so far as one can gather from the notes of his antiquarian relatives, and caused the sacrament to be administered by outlawed friars to every desperado in Tynedale.



Mr. Charlton of Reedsmouth is, I think, the last landowner left of this ancient and doughty greyne, though the name is still frequent enough. That of Robson, as prominent farmers on a large scale, is conspicuous throughout the country. The Robsons, however, like the Dodds and Milburnes, though social shades in the raiding and fighting period of the Border cannot be defined by modern standards, were more of the yeoman kind, in spite of the fact that the Scotts of Buccleugh for a long time had a special family feud with them. One great raid the latter made on Tynedale, with a special animus against the Robsons, apparently unprovoked and subsequent to the union of the Crowns, was justified by the latter, in that the Tynedale clan had not restored Buccleugh's great-grandfather's sword captured in a preceding century! What the Robsons and others were to the Charltons, though closely bound and doubtless intermarried with them, and still more to the Swinburnes and Dacres, such one gathers were the Armstrongs, and possibly even the Elliots, famous as was their name and numerous their following, to the Douglasses, the Scotts, and the Kerrs of Cessford and elsewhere. The touch of outlawry was always more or less upon them. Their "headsmen," unlike those of the more socially distinguished law-breakers, rarely or never appear as wardens or keepers on either March or as Crown officials. Their efforts when put forth were invariably "agin the law"—small lairds and graziers, distinguished only from one another by a doughtier sword arm or superior skill in leading a raid. There could have been small opportunity for cultivating the refinements of life, or inclination to worry themselves over social subtleties; the right of might, and the exigencies of the family feud, did not leave even the ladies much opening for snubbing one another, or adjusting their social relations. Indeed, it was in a sense tolerably democratic, this Border life; nor, I fancy, till the fun was all over, and people could do without their neighbours, did they begin to arrange themselves, as the outside world had been sorting itself since the Wars of the Roses. Most of the land, however,

in all this wide country, though the occupiers remain, has changed ownership within the last half century.

It is a delightful four miles of valley road from the mouth of the Chirdon and Taret burns up the now rapidly shrinking waters of the Tyne to Falstone ; a narrow byway wandering unfenced through gates, betimes among level meadows, but more often skirting the foot of the overhanging moors. We pass the modest church of Greystock, and the charmingly situated little hostelry of the Moorcock, which, in the days before trout and salmon fishing waxed so precious, was a favourite haunt of anglers. The main road up the dale, though a deserted-looking one enough, clings to the higher hill-slopes on its northern side. Beyond Falstone, however, the strip of riverside cultivation gets less pronounced and still less occupied, and the country yet more stimulating. The wild hills gather round in more intimate and threatening fashion, and the way lies more often along their heathery breasts, while the river itself, singing in a minor key upon its shingly bed, is no longer always fringed by meadows ; for the open wild comes down quite frequently now to meet it, clad with ferns and heather, and shaggy with stunted birch and ash and fir. Sometimes, too, ancient and branching alders group themselves like sacred groves on flats of natural turf, kept sweet and short by generations of mountain sheep.

The Wickhope burn comes in near here from the south, issuing from gorges still shaggy with the remnants of indigenous forests. From the ridge above it there is a commanding view of the river coiling into the folds of the hills, with the wooded spur of Mounceys in the foreground ; while hard by the road is an old and secluded seat of the Swinburnes, still in their hands. Further up the Lewis burn comes tumbling out of a narrow woody cleft, and pauses for a moment beneath the little stone arch, which lifts us over it, in a black pool, before rushing down to the Tyne. A track disappears up its glen leading to the isolated homesteads of one or two respectable farmers, whose flocks range the wastes

behind. But three centuries ago that ancient track, hardly noticeable now, a mere commonplace trail to the haunts of men of the saddle, not greatly concerned with carts or wains, was the outlet of a community whose performances outshone even those of other Tynedalers, and who were the despair of officials and their chiefs in London ; a sort of minor sanctuary was this of evil-doers, even when the rest of the country was for the moment coerced, "a marvellous strange ground of woodes and waters." It comes back to me on a grey and waning afternoon in late September, when autumn, in this high country, had begun to chill the winds and to scatter the jaded sycamore leaves over the surface of the mountain streams. There is nothing much to arrest one in the spot itself ; merely a dark burn pouring out of a little glen, clothed on one side with stunted trees and on the other with grass, along whose slope a farm track sidles. I could not resist some dalliance on the bridge as a tribute to the genius of the place, though my way was long, and the light was fading, and rain was threatening. For here, perhaps, was the last refuge of the genuine Tudor and Jacobean raider, before he abandoned the business to the ordinary cattle or sheep stealer, who carried on the old traditions for long after in less heroic fashion. This is near Plashetts, and Kielder is another three or four miles up the dale. Kielder is both beautiful and wild. The moors here fall back again somewhat, showing their open rugged breasts and sides all the better for it, and leaving space for the scattered settlements attached to Kielder Castle, a shooting-box of the Duke's, which lies among fir woods in the fold of loftly hills that here attain the normal Cheviot maximum of two thousand feet. For some miles now we have been wandering in what was debatable land, neither Scottish nor English, till the sixteenth century, and how far it extended through the passes into Roxburghshire, I do not know ; but it was a convenient harbour of refuge for the people who lived in it, though not by any means a country for the casual visitor.

We are now, however, approaching the dividing line that



NEAR KUTTER



was run just before the union of the Crowns, and the whole scene is in fine keeping with the spirit of its past, despite the little railway that climbs perseveringly through it, and the cottages scattered thinly over the fenceless vale, down which the Northern Tyne, robbed of its waters by half a score of lusty burns, and now itself but a trifling brook, comes piping its modest lay. There is here a Lilliputian station displaying, with laconic pathos on its narrow platform, a name embalmed in border song and story. Deadwater was in charge of a young woman the only time I alighted there. But for the little matter of the Union it would be a frontier custom house; who uses it I cannot imagine! The outlook from it is wide, solitary, and beautiful, incidentally disclosing a couple of farmhouses, and, perhaps, twice as many cottages. It stands on the international boundary line, which a shepherd pointed out to me, following an erratic course by rivulets and stone walls. I was going to say it does not mean much more to its solitary custodians nowadays than a county line. But this would savour of blasphemy for one thing, and be incorrect even on practical issues. For if you lived on the other side of the dyke, and had no pronounced convictions, you would be by inference a Presbyterian; while if you were entangled in the meshes of the law, you would be dealt with in another jargon altogether. We all know, too, that you might find yourself married any day through the dropping of a chance word; while if you were a young man arriving in a English colony and looking for a job, it would be almost everything to be able to hail from the far side of yonder burn. Otherwise I need hardly say the boundary just here, unlike the Tweed, cuts capriciously through a homogeneous people, quite unconscious of any cleavage, and up here on the waste as like one another as two peas. To the west of the railroad this same line straggles out by a stone dyke to a sharp point in the bare pasture-land, and then flies back to the more natural course of the Bell burn, which executes some little leaps as it tumbles along beneath the northern shadow of the rugged summit of Black Fell. Eastward it follows for a space

the infant streams of the Tyne, which here bend sharply in that direction towards their source, and strikes the summit of Peel Fell. In a wild hollow under the English slope of the latter mountain, the North Tyne springs from the peat mosses, and on its way down lingers silently for a time in a rushy flat, known to the Borderers of both Marches as the Deadwater, a name now embalmed, as we have seen, on the time-tables of the North British Railway. Here, too, we are just upon the watershed. A few hundred yards beyond the infant burns begin to trickle down through a region as wild and high as the English one towards the Liddle and the Teviot. This Kielder forest, with its upstanding, rugged fells, is generally accounted the south-western end of the Cheviots. There is no break, however, in the mountain chain, which extends in a still broad belt, with no dip in altitude, along the Cumbrian border by Bewcastle, Tynedale Head, Alston, and so to the Pennines. But the term "Cheviot" ceases here geographically, even if it be used at all colloquially south of Redesdale.

Among the traditions which lie thick among these hills that of the Cowt of Kielder is as familiar as any. I did not get as far as the Kielder stone, which helps to mark the boundary line somewhere on Peel Fell. It is merely a large isolated boulder, around which it was held unlucky to ride thrice "withershines"; that is, against the course of the sun, though why anybody should court disaster by so fantastic a performance only the folk-lorist may know. It is not from this, however, that the monolith has gathered fame, but from some associations with the aforesaid Cowt of Kielder, a fighting laird whose stalwart proportions provided him with this handy and suggestive sobriquet. He lived in the days of Robert Bruce, and his local rival was a neighbour of as great but more evil fame—Sir William Soulis, of Hermitage, in Liddesdale. He also was a person of gigantic strength, but, worse still, he combined it with the black arts, and made himself such a tyrant to neighbours gentle and simple, and from his mountain stronghold so flouted the king that the

latter waxed positively sick at the sound of his name, and begged the frequent complainants to boil the knight alive, if only he could hear no more of him. This heroic measure was actually put in force, and the cauldron that was utilized for the purpose was long preserved near Hawick. The Scottish king is said to have been greatly agitated at his petulant outburst being taken so literally, but we doubt if such a trifle would have kept Robert Bruce awake. Long before this fearsome ceremony, however, the place of which is still pointed out, the Soulis had extinguished the Cowt of Kielder. According to Leyden's ballad, the latter and his party, fully armed, rode over to hunt the deer in Liddesdale in defiance of its lord, and, with further bravado, the Cowt rode thrice round the Kielder stone against the sun on his way there. After this, apparently, he hedged somewhat by fastening a sprig of rowan in his helmet. Soulis, however, on perceiving his rival hunting his preserves, sent a messenger to bid them all to dinner. This was ominous, as the Scottish laird's feasts had been fatal to one or two of his neighbours, notably the laird of Mangerton. The Cowt, however, rejoicing in his strength, and trusting to the rowan sprig as a specific against the black arts practised by his rival, accepted the invitation, cautioning his followers to stick to their arms, and to be particularly on the alert if a bull's head was served up, which seems to have been a sign of mischief at Hermitage.

" And if the bull's ill-omened head  
Appear to grace the feast,  
Your whingers with unerring speed  
Plunge in each neighbour's breast."

In due course this unsavoury and fearsome dish was placed upon the table. But the quick hands of the guests were at the same moment spellbound, and each man riveted to his seat; all saving the Cowt with his rowan sprig, who sprang through the door and into the open, sword in hand, when a desperate running conflict ensued. Neither Soulis' sword, though aided by an adder handle, nor his retainers' spears,



could accomplish ought against the Herculean Cowt of Kielder, till the latter's helmet fell off in crossing a burn. Then at last he was overcome, and held under water by the spears of his late entertainers till life was extinct. He was buried near the Hermitage, and his grave of gigantic size is said to be still pointed out at the corner of a ruined chapel, and I have no reason to doubt this merely because I have never, to my misfortune, been in Liddesdale.

## CHAPTER XIII

### REDESDALE

THE tract of high moorland which separates North Tyne-dale from Redesdale comes to a point where the lesser river joins the greater, two miles below Bellingham. This wedge, running north-west for twenty miles between the famous valleys to the Scottish Border and Jedburgh forest, has expanded even at Bellingham to a width of half a dozen miles, and soon doubling that distance, maintains it, judged merely by the crow's flight, for the rest of its course. The pedestrian, however, who undertook to tramp, let us say, from Plashetts to the Byrness, would find the aforesaid crow had a prodigious advantage of him. By the time he had climbed hills deep in white grass or heather, picked his way over mosses, or circumvented them, or followed circuitous tracks, he would credit himself with at least twenty miles, even if the distance travelled were not actually quite so much. Both here and in the yet broader waste between the two Tynes there are a few lonely homesteads set back into their fringe, and reached by rough roads that pether out beyond them into the heath. It would be strange indeed if, come of such a vigorous stock, there were not a few original characters still surviving in these inner sanctuaries, though no longer, as once, fenced out from a hostile world by barricades of fallen trees. For when "raiding" in all its forms was practically extirpated, smuggling came up as an invaluable outlet to the wild spirits of the dale, and on their hardy little nags they pursued it with enthusiasm, and kept up a constant traffic with the sea-coast, and distributed ardent liquors all

over the country at popular prices. I must not put my foot in it, as Macaulay did, but an old friend, who knew every yard of this Border country in a practical fashion in early life, and lived in it, assures me that the king's writ, even in his memory, did not run in Bewcastle, which is, of course, just over the Cumbrian border. Bewcastle, in the raiding days, had as sinister a reputation as any district, and retained its dislike of conventionalities longer than any. Another acquaintance, who has good reason to know the inwardness of this silent land to-day, tells me of a patriarchal household deep within it, well known to him, and consisting of three generations, who own their considerable possessions in flocks and cash in common. Nothing is divided, various sons, brothers, and husbands running the big sheep farm with their own labour, while if any member of the clan, male or female, is in need of money, which is very seldom, as they rarely emerge into the world, they repair to a common till where the loose cash is kept and take out what they want. I have also heard doctors in this country descant upon the terrors of the night-work. But these hill people are all well off. Howsoever remote, no addition to even a herd's family is considered as properly introduced to the world in the absence of a doctor. The latter is met, perhaps, at the edge of the wilderness on a dark, snowy night in winter by the man of the household, or a representative on horseback to act as guide, with or without a lantern. Then, over some miles of trail in mist, black darkness, or driving snow, anything may happen. Sometimes, one such practitioner told me, even the guide would lose his way, and the pair would be wandering about half the night only to arrive after the event was all over. The fees are reasonably good, however, a shilling a mile, and there is no pinching to pay it. It is otherwise in the mountains of Lakeland. I once had to consult a young and clever doctor there, a stranger then to me, whose normal practice extended over a hundred or two square miles of mountain and valley. He punched me all over, and not only prescribed, but provided the remedy, and

his bill was half a crown, and that not very long ago! After this introduction we went a-fishing together, and he used to describe his night-work, which there was of necessity on foot, not being a horse country: long midnight tramps over the fells in snow and rain, with no slight risk to life, frequently for a shilling fee, a situation relieved somewhat during the tourist season. My friend has since shifted to a less arduous sphere. Every prudent man does so after a time, unless he is in a position to take a young partner, for the simple fact that scarcely any constitution can stand the work for more than a moderate term of years in either country.

The only road from North Tynedale to the Redewater starts from Bellingham, near the end of the wedge, and even that, though but some seven miles, is wild enough. But, after all, it is a regular highway of reasonable quality, and I traversed it often, both under the sun and under the moon. It rises laboriously from the village, and after winding between the fells, drops finely down with long descent to the historic hamlet of Otterburn, and beyond Otterburn, a little oasis of foliage, one can see the bare moors rolling away again towards the sources of the Wansbeck and to Upper Coquetdale.

On the descent to the Redewater, too, one crosses Watling Street, just here a wide, hard road that has driven straight through the country from Corbridge on the South Tyne, to follow up the Rede for a few miles before forsaking the highway again for the heather.

I presume the reader needs no reminder that here, at Otterburn, took place that immortal struggle in the moonlight between the forces of Hotspur and Douglas, which has rung down the ages, and is the basis of the famous ballad of Chevy Chase. We have no space here for ballad controversies, but this battle of Otterburn has, of course, a notable ballad of its own. Otterburn Tower, which was beset by Douglas when Harry Percy marched against him, is still here, in so far that a country house was raised on the site of the old fortress of the Halls less than a century ago. It is

now owned and occupied by Mr. Howard Pease, whose tales of Northern life find favour in discriminating circles beyond the Tyne and Tees. Some of the foundations of the old tower, originally built by the Umfravilles, are embedded in the modern house, and there is still the deep well, the mouth of which is covered by a grating, at the entrance to the present dining-room.

"I never hear the old song of Percy and Douglas," wrote Sir Philip Sydney, himself reared among the fortresses of the Welsh Marches, "that I find not my heart more moved than by a trumpet."

Otterburn is pre-eminently the great fight of Border story, and from that day to this has stirred the imagination of Borderers, as Flodden stirred that of the two nations in a wider sense. Not in the former case from the numbers engaged or from the butcher's bill, doubtless exceeded in many a stricken field of purely Border quarrel, but as a chivalrous and fiercely contested duel between the great rival houses of Percy and Douglas at a moment when they were at their zenith, and led by the most warlike of their respective names. And how it all came about must be repeated here. A brief truce between the nations having expired in August, 1388, a large Scottish army immediately gathered in Jedburgh Forest and crossed the Border. The main army poured over the Western March into Cumberland, but about five thousand picked men, under the Earls of Douglas, March, and Moray, went rapidly and silently through Northumberland, crossed the Tyne near Corbridge, and began burning, slaying, and ravaging the then richer county of Durham; the smoke they raised, it is said, giving the first alarm to the towns of Durham and Newcastle. Henry Percy, the first earl, then at Alnwick, despatched his two sons, Henry (Hotspur) and Ralph, to Newcastle, while he himself remained in the hope of cutting off the Scottish retreat. On August the 15th the Scots appeared before Newcastle, and two or three days of brisk skirmishing ensued. Hotspur, then just of age, had already won renown, though not yet his well-known sobriquet.

Douglas had a few more years, and proportionately more reputation, and was burning to meet the young Northumbrian in single combat. Some writers say his rash advance on Newcastle, while the earl was gathering a force at Alnwick in his rear, was solely prompted by this motive. At any rate, he sent Henry Percy a challenge at once, which the other as quickly accepted. "They met," says the chronicler, "at the utterance, mounted on two great coursers, with sharpe spears." Hotspur was struck in the side at the first charge and thrown from his saddle. "Whereon," says Froissart, "the Englishmen that stood without the gate made for the rescue, recovered him on foot, and brought him forthwith back into the town." The Scots, for every reason, soon abandoned the siege; but before retiring, Douglas rode to the gate with Hotspur's captured pennon and gauntlets, the latter embroidered with the lion of England and the Percy lion in pearls, and demanded a parley of his rival, thus addressing him, according to Froissart, "Syr, I shall bear this token of your prowess into Scotland, and shall set it high in my castle of Dalkeith, that it may be seen afar off." "By God, Lord Douglas," replied Hotspur, "you shall never carry it beyond Northumberland, of that be sure."

" ' Where schall I bide the ? ' sayd the Douglas,  
    ' Or where wylte thou come to me ?  
At otterbourne in the hygh way,  
    Ther maist thou well lodged be.'

" ' Ther schall I byde the,' sayd the Douglas,  
    By the fayth of my boyde.'  
    ' Thether schall I come,' said Syr Harry Percy,  
    ' My throwth I plyght to The.'

Hotspur, for various reasons, was held back for the moment by his knights, and the Scots, breaking their camp, retreated, plundering through Northumberland, till they came to Otterburn. It seems that Douglas had expected Hotspur to follow up his challenge, and from a sense of chivalry laid siege to Otterburn tower, to allow his enemy a chance of again crossing swords with him. The latter

was informed on his side of the other's movements. So, in the early morning of August 19, with six hundred lances and eight thousand foot (according to the highest estimate), the two Percies, with Lord Lumley, Mathew Redman, Robert Ogle, Grey of Heton, Grey of Horton, John Lilburne, and other Northumbrian and north-country knights, he rode out of Newcastle. They covered the long march of some thirty-two miles within the day, and wearied as the footmen must have been, fell suddenly on the Scots just after sunset, taking them completely by surprise. Happily for the latter, it was the encampment of the servants and attendants that lay across the direct and only line of attack; so the leaders and knights, who were supping at their ease, and had made themselves huts of boughs, had time to don their armour, while the others, supported by fresh bodies who had heard the uproar and the cries of "a Percy! a Percy!" stemmed the first rush of the Northumbrians. But these old campaigners had apparently well-arranged methods of procedure in case of surprise. On this occasion the *élite* of the Scots moved quietly round the skirting marshes, and fell upon the flank of the English, bringing matters to a condition of equality. Night had now fallen, though illumined by a brilliant moon, when this tremendous combat began in savage earnest. The English seem to have been in superior numbers, but they had endured a long day's march, which probably accounts for the fact that while in the first part of the battle, being the attacking party, things went more than well with them, they were gradually checked, and finally thrust back with all the worst of the combat and the greater slaughter. We naturally hear most of the desperate combats between knight and knight. At a critical moment for the Scots, Earl Douglas caused his silken banner, blazoned with St. Andrew's cross, the hearts and stars of Douglas, and the motto "Jamais arryere," to be advanced to the front.

Around the Scottish standard the battle now waged thick and fierce, the brothers Percy being foremost in the fray. The uncertain moonlight, no doubt, made ready identification

difficult and probably frustrated any schemes for a personal encounter between the two famous leaders. Our old friend Hardyng, the rhyming chronicler, and Hotspur's page, who fought by his side both here and at Shrewsbury, declares that his master achieved the revenge which fell to him by his own arm. But Froissart, who, though of course not present, gathered his information from those who were, and is held to be more credible, tells a different tale. However that may be, the two Percies hewed their way to the Douglas's standard, and Sir Patrick Hepburn and his sons, among others, fell in its defence. The rival banners met, Froissart tells us, and there was a sore fight, the mingled cries of "a Percy ! a Douglas !" rising above the din. "Of all the bataylles and encountrynges that I have made mencion of heretofore in all this my story, great or small, this bataylle was one of the sorest and best foughten without cowards or faynte hearts ; for there was neither knight nor squier but that did his devoyre and foughte hande to hande." Douglas, misdoubting the issue at one moment, though in the haste of the first surprise he had left both breastplate and bascinet behind him, seized an axe, and like Hector, says Froissart, hewed his way through the *mêlée* till, unrecognized in the dim light, he was thrust to the earth with three spears. This would seem, however, to have been well on in the night. As he lay dying he was stoutly defended by his chaplain, William Lundie, and when his plight was discovered, and one of those around him, Sir John Sinclair, asked how he feared, he replied, "Right poorly, yet, thank God, but few of my ancestors have died in their beds I count myself dead, for my heart beats slow, but think to avenge me. Raise my banner which lieth near me on the ground, show my state neither to friend nor foe, lest mine enemies rejoyce and my friends be discomforted." If Hotspur was avenged, so in a degree was Douglas ; for the Percies, through pressing too rashly forward, according to the English accounts, were both captured. Sir Ralph surrendered, exhausted by wounds, to a new-made knight, John Maxwell and Hotspur in the same plight fell to Sir Hugh Montgomery,



and thenceforth the best of the day, or rather of the night, remained with the Scots. The Scottish ballad makes Hotspur, when at last overpowered, somewhat concerned lest there should be no one of sufficient rank on the spot to whom he might surrender with honour. On discovering, however, that his antagonist is Sir Hugh Montgomery, he is quite satisfied, for, according to the same ballad, he has himself already killed Douglas—

“When Percy wi’ the Douglas met,  
I wat he was fu’ fain,  
They swakked their swords till sair they swat,  
And the bludd ran down like rain.

“That Percy with his gude sword,  
That could so sharply wound,  
Has wounded Douglas on the brow,  
Till he fell to the ground.”

However slain, Douglas lingered, as we have seen, for a brief space, and his death, screened from his troops by a braken bush, is connected by a familiar and pretty tradition with Percy’s later surrender. The latter had expressed regret that the great Douglas could not receive his sword, and Montgomery urged him to surrender to an adjoining braken bush, behind which, unknown to the other, lay the body of the Scottish chieftain.

The Bishop of Durham, who had marched from Newcastle with a thousand men, arrived just before dawn to meet the remnant of Hotspur’s force retreating through the now moonless night from the stricken field, while the Scots, with a hundred English knights as prisoners, were secure in their strong camp. The statements as to the loss on either side differ so hopelessly as to make any here futile. Froissart, for example, gives the number of killed and wounded English as eighteen hundred. The fight at Otterburn, at any rate, took the breath out of the Borderers, and there was peace there for the ensuing and last twelve years of Richard the Second’s reign. In the next battle with a Douglas, as we shall see when we get there, Hotspur had an ample revenge

for Otterburn, though, strange to say, he was himself little more than a spectator.

Leaving the Rede water for the moment and following a fair road heading due east over the moors towards Rothbury, fifteen miles away, a short hour's walk brings one to Elsdon, a village of some interest for its remote and picturesque situation, its ancient church, its pele-tower vicarage, and for many characteristics peculiar to an old abiding place of relative importance but great isolation. What is left of it lies about a large triangular green sloping to the south, beneath which runs the Elsdon burn. The old church, with its ample graveyard, and further back, raised above the rest, its vicar's battlemented fortress, fill the upper side. All about are lonely fells which make a suggestive setting to this old haunt of rugged and sequestered and once self-sufficing humanity, with its battalions of rude gravestones canted this way and that over a full acre of shady turf, its generous green below, where the still-treasured site of the cockpit, though interesting, seems as a relic somewhat thin considering what much more serious gatherings this expanse of immemorial turf must have often seen. Some curious letters are preserved written by Dr. Dodgson,\* a scholarly parson and man of the world, afterwards Bishop of Ossory, who suddenly found himself vicar of Elsdon, about the year 1760.

"Don't give yourself the trouble," he writes to a friend, "to send my letters to this place, for 'tis almost impossible to receive 'em without sending sixteen miles to fetch 'em. I am my own surgeon and apothecary; no creature of the profession within the same distance. A clog-maker combs my whig upon my curate's head for a block, and his wife powders it with a dredging-box. The vestibule of my castle is a low stable, above it a kitchen, in which are two beds. The curate and his wife lie in one, Margery the maid in the other. I lie in the parlour, between two beds to keep me from being frozen to death. The village consists of my tower,

\* Great-grandfather of the late Mr. Dodgson, author of *Alice in Wonderland*, etc.

an inn for Scotch carriers, five little farmhouses, and a dozen more inhabited by poor people who receive the parish allowance, and superannuated shepherds. The principal farmhouses are five or six miles apart. The whole country looks like a desert. [This was, of course, at that period the Lowlanders' mental attitude towards wild or rugged scenery.] The richest farmers are Scotch Dissenters, and go to meeting-house at Birdhope Crag, ten miles from Elsdon. They do not interfere in ecclesiastical matters, nor study polemical divisions. They are hereditary Presbyterians, part of their estate rather than of enthusiasms. Those near Elsdon come to church, those near Birdhope Crag go to chapel, others of both sorts will go to the nearest church or conventicle. There is a good understanding, and they will frequently do penance together in a white sheet, with a white wand, and barefoot, in one of the coldest churches in England, and at the coldest season."

Again: "Not a tree or a hedge within twelve miles to break the force of the wind. I have lost everything but my reason, and cover my head with three nightcaps and a pair of stockings. As washing is cheap, I wear two shirts, and, for want of a wardrobe, hang my great-coat on my back. There is to be a hopping on Thursday s'night—the conclusion of a pedlar's fair; a great concourse of braw lads and lasses, who throw off their wooden shoes, shod with plates of iron, and put on Scotch nichevers made of horse-leather."

Adjoining the modern Otterburn tower, which is girt about with fine timber, is a picturesque hamlet containing an inn of some reputation. Otterburn was the chief seat of the Halls, a fact already elucidated in these pages when concerned with the doings of one of the last of them—"Mad Jack"; and the Halls were the chief clan of Redesdale, run very close by the Reeds of Troughend and elsewhere, while Hedleys, Potts, Fletchers, and others, though of somewhat less importance, each comprised a family squadron bound together by ties of name and blood, and ready for any adventure in their own particular line. Just about Otterburn

the valley expands somewhat, leaving space for several grass farms, with their homesteads, marked on the bare landscape by clusters of trees, to spread up and about from the meadows that border the stream to the fringe of the moors.

The battle is thought to have taken place from one to two miles above Otterburn, on the lower eastern slope of the vale, the hayfields through which the Rede now prattles having then, no doubt, been the marshes which played a part in such simple tactics as were incidental to that heady fight. In a small wood near the main road stands a rude shaft, supposed to mark the spot where Douglas died, and somewhat irrelevantly called Percy's Cross. Further along the road up the dale, I found myself, one Sunday morning of bright sunshine and balmy wind, beside a carefully hewn and inscribed stone bench, set up in the last century at the edge of the highway, and just above the Rede. The inscription reads thus : "*In these fields, on the 19th of August, 1388, the battle of Otterburn was fought, and deeds were done which in the noblest of English ballads live immortally recorded.*" One, of course, needed no such reminder. I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet. Yet confronting the pilgrim on this quiet highway, amid the encircling moors, these few simple words in stone seemed, if anything, to accentuate the thrill that upon such a spot must move the heart of any with the faintest sense of the past, or a mind not utterly dead to its echoes. There was no stir in the fields, nor any traffic on the road, as I rested for half an hour on these eloquent and suggestive flagstones. The Rede piped faintly in a woody hollow not far below, and the light cloud-shadows sailed over the breezy pastures and flecked the higher shoulders of the moors. A mile or two distant, on the long slopes that spread upwards from the river, peering out of a grove of mighty elm and ash trees, I could see the gables of Troughend. Half an hour before I had been standing in front of it on the Watling Street, and had been glad to be able to recall if but two or three verses only of the

ballad celebrating the tragic death of Percy Reed that gave me pause there. It was not this present mansion, scarcely yet two centuries old, and now a huge farmhouse, that sheltered the hapless hero of the tale, but the original pele tower, whose foundations are still visible close beside it. No personal incident, though it happened in Elizabeth's reign, seems to have remained longer in the minds of the natives than the betraying of Percival Reed to his death at the hands of the Croziers by the Halls—"the fause Ha's" of Girsonfield, a homestead just across the dale.

Now, Percy Reed was a great hunter and a fine soldier, and held the office of Keeper of Redesdale under the Warden of the Middle March. Through his zeal in the cause of order he had incurred the hostility of his own neighbours, the Halls, as well as the Croziers, a family of regular moss-troopers just on or over the Scottish Border, some of whom he had brought to justice. The Halls, though brewing vengeance, laid low for a time in simulated friendship, till an opportunity occurred of making the Croziers the instruments of Percy's undoing. Having laid their plans with these moss-troopers, the Halls invited the unsuspecting subwarden to hunt with them at the head of the dale. Though his wife dreamed fearsome dreams, and, worse still, the loaf appeared at breakfast upside down on the platter, the bold Percy laughed at the omens, and, with a light heart, joined his treacherous companions.

" 'To the hunting, ho !' cried Percy Reed.  
 'The morning sun is on the dew ;  
 The cauler breeze frae off the fells  
 Will lead the dogs to the quarry true.  
 To the hunting, ho !' cried Percy Reed,  
 And to the hunting he has gane ;  
 And the three fause Ha's o' Girsonfield  
 Alang wi' him he has ta'en."

They wound up their day's sport at a hut in the Batinghope, a lonely glen near the sources of the Rede, when five of the Croziers, by preconcerted arrangement, appeared suddenly on the scene. The Halls then galloped away in

pretended fear, having previously tampered with Percy's arms.

" They've s'town the bridle off his steed  
And they've put water in his lang gun,  
They've fixed his sward within the sheath,  
That out again it winna come.

" O turn thee, turn thee, Johnie Ha' !  
O turn thee, man, and fight wi' me ;  
When ye come to Troughend again  
My gude black naig I will gie thee.

" O turn thee, turn thee, Tommy Ha' !  
O turn now, man, and fight wi' me ;  
If ever ye come to Troughend again  
My daughter Jean I'll gie to thee."

So Percy Reed was slain by the Croziers and hacked after death with such ferocity that his body had to be brought back piecemeal in pillow-slips to Troughend. It is not surprising that the ghost of Percy haunted Redesdale persistently. He was often seen in the daylight in his green hunting coat, with his long gun, traversing the moors of Batinghope, and sometimes on stormy nights he would come and crack his whip in fury around the walls of his own tower of Troughend. Later on, and within quite modern times, he assumed the gentle guise of a dove, and used to perch on a large stone in the Rede at Pringlehaugh, and as the folks went on Sunday to the meeting-house at Birdhope Crag, they used to take their hats off to " the spirit of Troughend."

As for the fause Ha's, they were driven with indignation from Redesdale, leaving a slur upon the name, and causing all the other Halls for generations much inconvenience by the constant protests they felt bound to make against any connection with the fause Ha's. The ballad was handed down by oral tradition, and given by one of the Telfers to Scott, who alludes to it in the first canto of *Rokeby*, where Bertram exclaims—

" Do not my native dales prolong,  
Of Percy Reed the tragic song,  
Trained forward to his bloody fall  
By Girsonfield, the treacherous Hall."

An old woman named Kitty Hall used to croon the lay early in the last century, and always wound up with regrets that the miscreants of the tale bore her name. A respectable inn-keeper, another of the Hall clan, is well remembered as being wont to exclaim when in his cups, "Aw wunna disguise me neame's Ha'—Tommy Ha', but aw trust to me meaker a'm nit comao' the fause-hearted Ha's that betrayed Percy Reed." One may assume, however, that most of the Halls survived the stigma.

The long road up Redesdale, under the Carter Fell, into Scotland is an admirable one, and pursues a wild and beautiful course of a dozen miles before it drops over the high watershed into Roxburghshire and Jed Forest. At the village of Horsley, three miles up, there is a roomy inn, the Redesdale Arms, whose former landlord, Tommy Ha', has just been alluded to. Being regularly utilized by sportsmen of condition, its capacities may be assumed and its name, therefore, taken note of, in a country where accommodation is scarce. Near Rochester, a mile or so on, and finely poised on a high ledge commanding a wide outlook, is the Roman station of Bremenium. I was quite unprepared for such a fine and well-preserved camp so far in advance of the Roman wall. It was built, no doubt, to guard the Watling Street, which here leaves our main road and shoots over the moors toward Kelso. Bremenium occupies a level plateau of some four acres, the ground falling sharply away on three sides. A great deal of the wall is perfect, some of it standing ten feet high and in places twenty feet thick, while the gateways are still in good repair. On the level sward within are two pele houses still perfect, and three or four modern cottages, from one of which an ancient and retired shepherd emerged and entertained me well for half an hour. He was obviously proud of the camp of which he was an accidental occupant, and might have been an antiquary if he had not been a shepherd. There is no doubt that his declining years were greatly cheered by constant speculation on the customs and habits of the builders of these massive walls of masonry, on to which his windows

looked, nor do I think he lost any enjoyment from being without much notion of dates and periods. That of the Romans he alluded to as five hundred years ago. The peasant, who is really an amateur antiquary, and has sufficient history for the past, we most of us know. But I am sure, since I have met them, that there are numbers of unlettered and inarticulate men who feel much curiosity and interest in the relics of the unknown and mysterious dead that daily confront them. My shepherd of Bremenium, at least, knew the track of Watling Street, and as we stood at the north-west angle of the wall looking directly over the wild moors, through which it runs, buried under grass and heather, towards Jedburgh and Kelso, he told me how he used to drive ewes in here over that same trail from the latter town, and remembered the first importation of black-faced sheep across the Border, whereas now they are more numerous on the hills than the native Cheviot. He also told me that the Scottish ewes brought in from there in the summer used to get restless and stray northward just before they had their lambs. It is curious how custom, stereotyped, no doubt, by experience, keeps some mountain breeds so exclusively to their own ranges. The Northumbrian moors and the much wetter and stonier Lakeland mountains are in sight of one another, but to my knowledge I never saw a Herdwick, the universal sheep of the latter in Northumberland, nor did I ever see a Cheviot in Lakeland. The Blackface is a wonderfully adaptable mountaineer, and not only that, but he makes such a good cross, one need never be surprised to find him in a suburban paddock. But on the moors in his wild state there is nothing to touch him for his grace, his dignity, his carriage, and complete harmony with wild surroundings. What prettier sight is there than when a scattered band, grazing near to the side of a moorland road, run together, and in a solid phalanx defy the advances of your impudent terrier, or, again, of some old big-horned tup stalking shoulder deep through the heather? No Herdwicks, nor Cheviots, nor Welsh Kerrys, nor Cardigans, nor Exmoors can approach the Blackface as



a feature in mountain scenery, though for grace and symmetry no sheep in England, to my thinking, can equal the bright-eyed Cheviot. The goats that only a century ago roamed these hills as they did the Welsh mountains, where we all know, thanks to Shakespeare, that they stampeded on the night of Glyndwr's birth, must have been at least as brave a sight as the Blackface, but the goats have gone; I have seen a few in Wales, but usually in humiliating propinquity to farmhouses, and an occasional one in the Cheviots. But modern science has improved upon goat's whey as a cure for consumption and other ailments, an exploded faith which preserved some flocks to the Cheviots, at any rate, till quite recent times.

After Rochester, the Jedburgh road breaks out from all entanglements on to open heather, with the Rede shimmering far below amid narrow strips of grass, bosky here and there with the remnants of the stunted oak forests that once straggled over these cold hill slopes. A mile or two beyond the dale closes up for the moment, leaving but a narrow glen for the passage of the river's peaty streams, while our road traverses the high shoulder above, amid a fine display of purple heather breaking here and there into outcrops of upstanding crag.

And now, with the vale once more expanding somewhat, there is disclosed from this pinnacle of the highway before it again descends, several miles of its almost straight and treeless progress towards Scotland. A very inner sanctuary of Redesdale this must have been against these English neighbours with whose property its hardy sons took such frequent and outrageous liberties, while as regards the Scots at whose immediate gate it lay, there was probably no settlement to speak of beyond this point till the Union, and, indeed, there is little enough now. Some three miles up the green trough, down which the Rede now meanders a mere silvery thread, where ungathered hay-pikes may even yet be seen amid the stone dyke enclosures, stands the Byrness, a capacious stone farmhouse, set on a ridge above the road. Mellow with



ROTHBURY BRIDGE



sufficient years, and a bright glimpse of flowers along its sunny front, screened from the winds by groves of elm and ash, it looks up and down the bare vale and out on to the steep fells before and behind it, telling its own tale as that of a mighty sheep farm. Every one in the Middle March on both sides of the Border knows or has heard of the Byrness, and of the Robsons who have been its tenants for generations. What its limits are and the number of sheep that graze within them, I know not. The Byrness, at any rate, dominates the valley for some miles, and the hills for more, while, if you climb up the latter, you are always confronted on either hand by the wilderness. A bird might fly to Plashetts on the North Tyne in a dozen miles; but if I were going to walk it, I should take care to start betimes in the morning. In the other direction, travelling northwards, you would remain in the wild heart of the Cheviots indefinitely till you chose to escape by following some burn to the right or left into the adjacent country, either Scottish or English. Indeed, the source of the Coquet is but three or four miles from here, for one is now drawing right into the spinal ridge of the Cheviots. The hills as about Deadwater and Kieldar are steeper if not higher, for the range does not seriously exceed two thousand feet till it reaches its northern portion in the Wooler districts. But the "Haws" and "Dodds," the "Fells," "Pikes," and "Craggs" that toss and heave over these hundreds of square miles of heather, grass, and fern, break out up here betimes in bolder shapes, with rugged caps and rock-plated flanks. It is curious, too, how little the Saxon and Scandinavian have impressed their bloody tales on place-names. Throughout Wales, where life both in primitive and mediæval times was mainly passed as here in deeds of arms, fields, hills, and streams in every quarter tell the tale by their names. Topography would seem to appeal more to the Celtic imagination; the wood, the mountain-side, the valley, to reflect and retain the shadows of the men who fell or triumphed there; the brook once dyed in blood to run red in perpetuity; the cries of the wounded, the shouts of the

victors, the traitor's crime, still to echo their long-forgotten tale in the daily traffic of rural life and on the page of parish maps. But here, though a fat volume could be filled with the records still extant of ancient strife in these two dales alone, scarcely any trace of it lingers in the nomenclature. Even that long fierce warfare throughout the centuries preceding the Norman conquest between Saxon and Dane, Celt or Pict along the Border, has left almost a blank upon the map. The Teuton, no doubt, has had the final say in this matter, and his imagination, we may fairly assume, did not run in this particular groove. Beasts of the chase, on the other hand, often appear in place-names; but, then, their harbourage was a more permanent fact. The wail of widows or the revenge of a chieftain, though no doubt sufficiently remembered, left no echoes in this particular glen or phantoms in that particular meadow for the more practical Northumbrian of any era.

A pack of foxhounds is kennelled at the Byrness, and I should think that no other in Britain has at once so romantic and so remote a domicile. Mr. Jake Robson, the owner, is as noted for his indefatigable pursuit on horseback of the Northumbrian mountain foxes as is Joe Bowman of Patterdale, in his humbler capacity of huntsman, for the endurance with which he has followed his hounds on foot over the steeper fells between the Pennines and Helvellyn for the last thirty years. The latter I have several times had cause to admire on the mountain, to say nothing of the racy eloquence of his fireside reminiscences. Mr. Robson I know only through the mouth of his friends, and by his reputation, which is no mean one. The romance of wild fox-hunting, in the saddle, at any rate, is here, I should opine, at its best. Mr. Robson's followers, who must of necessity be somewhat limited for the most obvious reasons, declare that there is nothing like it anywhere else. There is certainly no such illimitable sweep of wild upland at the disposal of a pack quartered in its very heart, or one that wants more knowing, and, moreover, quite unknown to outsiders. Exmoor, if

three years of boyhood spent on it mainly in pursuit of fish and fowl, and occasionally hares and foxes, may qualify one to judge, is comparatively hard and sound. Moreover, it is not so rugged, and is also nowadays very fashionable. This one is a lonely wilderness of prodigious extent on both sides of the Border. Furthermore, the killing of foxes here, as in Cumberland, is a vital necessity in the cause of the lambs. No sportsman in these countries views with equanimity the escape of a stout fox, for stout foxes are common, in that he may live to run another day. He has to be killed if possible, at all costs, and in all weathers, and demands an endurance in men and hounds beyond the common. There is no vestige of artificiality about hunting here, though it probably would not commend itself to the average lessee of a hunting-box in the shires. Moreover, there would be no motoring up to London on off days, nor any escape from that boredom which country life seems to entail upon so many modern sportsmen when out of the saddle, or not engaged in the ranks of what Mr. Abel Chapman calls the pom-pommers.

Two miles above the Byrness homestead, near which, by the way, is a diminutive church, one finds the valley as it once more closes up transformed into a narrow lake, which winds towards Scotland for some mile and a half. This is the reservoir of quite recent creation which supplies Newcastle, and sounds prosaic, though, like Cwm Elan and Lake Vyrnwy, it is, in actual fact, a romantic addition to the scenery, and well-stocked with trout, if not set perhaps in quite so inspiring a frame as these others. On its banks, sheltered like the Byrness by fine timber, is another old homestead, that of Catcleugh, once owned by a branch of those Halls who bought Otterburn after the attainder of their eccentric relative in the 'fifteen. Henceforward solitude, broken only by a wayside house or two, continues with the traveller till in some three or four miles he tops the watershed and drops into Scotland.

The Redesweir, this wedge of upland crossed by the highway which parts the waters falling into England and

Scotland respectively, is famous for a border brawl that arose from a friendly judicial meeting and the well-known ballad which commemorates it. It has already been said that the whole reign of Elizabeth was distinguished in these parts by almost continuous strife, both international and interclan, in addition to the Rising of the North in 1571, which cost the Earl of Northumberland his head.

That the Percies, the natural leaders of Northumberland, were for the very fear of them practically restrained from northern residence by the Crown, and this for some generations must have been wholly a misfortune to the Border. There was no dominant family of outstanding rank—for the Nevilles were in Cumberland, and out of reach of rivalry to administer authority and compel respect. Forsters, Swinburns, Fenwicks, Herons, and others, all of the same degree, competed for influence with the alien warders of the Marches sent from the south to Berwick, or were wardens themselves, and Sir John Forster held office in the Middle March when the affair of the Redesweir happened.

I ought, before this, perhaps, to have said a word as to the duties of a warden, but it must be only a word, for a complicated system that lasted, with variations, for four centuries would fill a chapter. Both kingdoms, when not actually at war, and again after the Union, were at one as to policing the Borders so far as possible, and indemnifying one another's subjects for private raids. In Elizabeth's time the ceremony of the wardens' courts held annually in the open on the "Debatable" land was briefly somewhat thus:—The day appointed, once or twice a year, as the case might be, was proclaimed or posted up on both sides of the Border. All who had grievances, which mainly, of course, related to four-footed stock, though sometimes to the retention of private captives of bow and spear, then proceeded to lay them before their own warden, who, if he held them legitimate, forwarded the particulars to his brother official on the other side for inquiry and consideration against the day of meeting. This last was quite a formal ceremony, at

its commencement, at any rate, whether held on a mountain-top by a cairn, or on a wild watershed like the Redesweir. Each warden for the Middle March, a Scot or a Kerr probably from the one side, a Percy, and in later days an alien like Sir Robert Carey, occasionally a Neville, or, as in the case of the Redesweir a Forster, from the other, repaired thither backed by a goodly company. A truce was then solemnly proclaimed till the next day at sunrise, after which a jury composed of six from either nation was chosen. The cases were then examined by the wardens and their clerks, and there were many other elaborate rites and formalities of procedure impossible to enumerate here. If, on the evidence, a man was acquitted, the warden wrote across the bill "clear, as I am persuaded upon my conscience and honour." In the case of a conviction, he was responsible for the delivery of the goods or culprit, leaving a servant of his own as hostage. That the peace on such occasions, when individuals came face to face with their particular enemies, was often maintained with difficulty, and sometimes not at all, goes without saying. This time the Fenwicks had raised a stir. Suddenly remembering that one of them had been murdered thirty years before by a Crozier, they rode into Liddesdale and slew a number of that clan in their beds. Sir J. Carmichael, who was deputy-keeper of Liddesdale, obtained the surrender of their guide from Sir George Heron, who was keeper of Redesdale, a seemingly modest concession. But it was too much for Sir John Forster, the warden who ejected Heron from office, and then proceeded to appoint a Court with Carmichael, outraging the proprieties of Border custom, as the latter was not a warden at all.

The gathering was an exceptionally large one, but things went well for a time, the wardens drinking together amicably, and their followers playing cards and throwing dice. Later on Forster and Carmichael came to words about an English delinquent condemned for non-appearance, the former, who seems to have held office for thirty-seven years, slighting Carmichael as of inferior position to himself. The latter,



taking it as a slur upon his family, grew hot, and protested he was as good a man as the warden, when the latter, according to the Scottish ballad—

“ Raised and raxed him where he stood,  
And bade him match him with his marrows,  
Then Tyndail heard them reason rude,  
And they loot off a flight of arrows.”

The English account, however, says that cries of “I say! I say! comparison,” terminated this unseemly dispute, but that almost immediately a Crozier shot an arrow at Fenwick of Wallington and wounded him, which seems more in the natural order of things. Then with one shout they raised the slogan.

*Fie, Tindall, to it! Jedburgh's here!* and the fat was in the fire. Forster and Carmichael made vain efforts to stem the torrent. The Scots were at first driven back, but another company from Jedburgh, arriving in the nick of time, turned the tide, and, after some fierce fighting, drove the English from the field, pursuing them for three miles. Heron and many others were killed, and Forster, with several of his friends, taken prisoner. Each side laid the fault of beginning the trouble on the other. The Scottish minstrel sings—

“ Who did invent that day of play,  
We need not fear to find him soon,  
For Sir John Forster, I dare well say,  
Made us this noisome afternoon.”

Ten years later another entertainment of the same kind occurred, which is sometimes mixed up with *the Redesweir*. On this occasion, Kerr of Fernyhurst, the Scottish warden, brought two thousand men to the same tryst, and when Forster showed him a letter from his own King James, ordering him to give satisfaction to the complaints of Henry Collingwood, Fernyhurst replied haughtily, “I will answer the king.” The wardens, nevertheless, proceeded to business, when suddenly the Scottish drums and fifes struck up, and the foot musketeers charged down without warning upon the

English. Kerr himself remained inactive, but Lord Francis Russell was shot, and Forster and a hundred of his men and horses were carried off prisoners to Scotland.

The position became so intolerable that it was seriously proposed to revert to the methods of Hadrian and Severus, and build a rampart along this exposed part of the Border after the fashion of the Roman wall. But in due course the union of the Crowns, if it did not stop all Border foraging, terminated its international significance, strengthened the hands of the officials, and, in short, reduced the business to family feuds, and the adventures of outlaws and cattle thieves.

## CHAPTER XIV

### COQUETDALE TO WOOLER

THE wanderer who feels disposed to journey by road from Redesdale to Wooller, making Otterburn, of necessity, his starting-point, will hardly encounter a dull mile in the five-and-thirty or thereabouts he would be called upon to traverse. The first two stages, divided by Rothbury and the Coquet valley, are mainly through a moorland country, much of which is bold and striking in character, as well as wild. That between Elsdon and the Coquet, I only know from a general survey, but a veteran shepherd of my acquaintance, a man of traditions and a regard for the past as well, I trust, as for the truth, tells me that in his boyhood it was a notable haunt of adders, and for that reason was, or had been, in more favour as a goat than a sheep pasture, since the goat is said to have a keen eye for an adder, and some skill in destroying it with a stamp of its fore foot. But there are no goats now on Elsdon moor, nor I fancy are the Cheviot or blackfaced sheep, who have taken their place, any longer annoyed by snakes.

The Coquet, as already noted, though without pretension to the size or renown of Tweed or Tyne, is nevertheless in some sort the most representative Northumbrian stream. Upon Tweed, Scotland has undoubtedly greater claims. Durham, again, has some small share in the Tyne, whose romance, however, is a little obscured by the industrial orgies of its lower waters. But the Coquet tumbles pure and clean through the very heart of the county, from the wilds of its Cheviot Borderland to the historic towers of Warkworth by the sea.

None of the little inland towns of Northumberland are commonplace in situation if not greatly distinguished for architectural merit. Be-castled Alnwick on its woody ridge, Hexham climbing from its wide, fretting river to the noble abbey that forms its apex, Wooler a very footstool of the Cheviots just where they spring into real mountains, Berwick, if we may venture on the inclusion, an epic in itself, Morpeth more peaceful, but charming on its bright trout stream in the lap of leafy hills, are all full of character. And what of Rothbury, the last of them ! There is room for yet another type, and it is worthily filled by the clean, old-fashioned town, straggling at ease along both banks of the turbulent Coquet, and overhung on most sides by hills that are not merely of average Cheviot height, but more than average Cheviot boldness in outline ; a town in a deep trough hemmed in by towering steeps, that, however, softened by lately-planted woods, or laced with enclosures of much older date upon their nearer slopes, speak from their still unbridled summits of back-lying solitudes, both to the east and to the north and to the west. Descending upon Rothbury from the high ridge of the lonely moorland road to Alnwick, more especially in stormy weather, the whole situation suggests the conventional, though somewhat banal epithet of "alpine," more than any spot frequented by man in all Northumberland. This is due, in part, to the fine rugged summits of Simonside and Tosson hill. But the deep gorge in which Rothbury nestles presents altogether a fine effect, opening westward to meet the Coquet as it comes gleaming down through green meadows, yet so greatly narrowing below the town that for some distance the high road is cut into the steep wooded hills of Crag-side, Lord Armstrong's seat, while the river boils in rocky pools below. Once out of the gorge, however, save for the varying moods of this same restless river, which are mostly hidden from all but the anglers who wade in its stream, the long road down the dale towards Warkworth and the sea, though pleasant enough, is a thought tame, and does not compare in interest with most that we have lately

traversed, and the few we may yet hope to follow, and space presses. Brinkburn Priory, the still ample ruin of an Augustinian house, picturesquely seated by the Coquet, is well worth a visit. Weldon Bridge, too, further on, opens up a characteristic reach of the river, both up and down stream, and is commanded by a roomy old fishing-inn, which looks as if it might exude the post-prandial fish-stories of generations of exuberant and reminiscent anglers at every pore. But no rods rested handily against the angles of the inn walls the last time I dallied there, and the thin streams of the Coquet piped feeble airs against the buttresses of the bridge, suggestive neither of salmon nor of trout. A solitary angler from some far country, whose sunburnt visage spoke as eloquently as his own moving tale of his meritorious but futile perseverance, leaned his arms sadly on the central parapet of the bridge, and sought consolation in tobacco. A few miles below, Felton Bridge, a village of some note in Northumbrian story, strides the Coquet, at a point, too, where the river has so fashioned its fretted channels as to contrive an altogether alluring scene.

The long, wide street, running parallel to the finest trout-ing river in Northumberland, which comprises most of Rothbury, has a peaceful, easy-going look, which even the austerity of its northern architecture cannot dispel. In former days, however, it was neither peaceful nor easy-going, unless the attitude of its turbulent people towards their neighbours' kine may be dismissed as unconventional. Space prevents any dallying in Coquetdale. Such we allowed ourselves in the valleys of the Tyne and Rede, and though this is not a guide-book, but a record of desultory roaming, I have nevertheless endeavoured so to order my steps, or at any rate my pen, as to give as reasonably lucid a picture of past and present Northumberland as may be hoped for in a brief compass, without that amassing of facts which entails compression and spells dulness. But the story and atmosphere of Coquetdale, to-day and yesterday and long ago, is practically that of the Tyne and Rede. Around and above Rothbury the same

large-limbed, taciturn, horse-loving graziers pasture their sheep upon a thousand hills, and their shorthorns where the richer grass land of the lower levels admits of their well-being. For the Northumbrian does not handle scrub stock. The days are long passed in Great Britain, unless perhaps in the extremities of Scotland, where hardy runts are left to eke out an unprofitable existence on sheep mountains. Science, competition, and experience have now allotted to every class of country the animal that thrives best therein, and is still working out the problem. When one considers the wealth of skill and knowledge brought to bear on this subject, and the fine point to which it has been brought by able men innumerable, who have devoted their lives to it, the agricultural theories emitted by callow citizens and narrow-minded, uninstructed mechanics on public platforms and at Westminster, men not even amateur dabblers in a most complicated science, are amazing. One asks one's self again and again, why are its experts the only experts that outsiders consistently flout—when its records in all countries are richer in the ruin of the ingenuous and the unskilled than those of any trade under the sun? But that is of no use; there must be something about land that turns the heads of unsophisticated but otherwise reasonable people—and makes fools of them. The greater part of the cattle grazed to-day in Northumberland are Irish, and in consequence of shorthorn pattern, though here and there a dash of Kerry or some other breed crops up inevitable in herds of beasts collected from innumerable small breeders. But Ireland, outside those western portions chiefly exploited by the tourist, and of such abiding service to the politician, is a fine cattle country, and every one knows how its exported "stores" thrive on English pastures. Northumbrian friends who handle them largely tell me that there is some falling off in the quality of the young animals that come from those districts, where butter-making is most active. That calves should sometimes suffer under such conditions is perhaps inevitable, but it is at least in a good cause. It is quite another thing, however, the

equanimity with which North British farmers are contemplating the possible extinction of their Irish rivals, the big graziers, inasmuch as they are the only competing bidders for the young cattle of the ordinary small Irish farmer, and materially help to stiffen the price. When the latter and the politician have legislated or persecuted their more substantial neighbour out of existence, northern farmers, who for the best of reasons have intimate knowledge of the Irish market, tell me that the small breeders, always unable to hold their stock over, will then be at their mercy, and the price of Irish stores come tumbling down in a manner wholly satisfactory to the Saxon. That Nationalist politicians or their cattle-raiding friends should concern themselves with so practical a forecast is not, I imagine, in the least likely. But when the awakening comes, the howl will be none the less strident because the damage was self-imposed, and we shall have, no doubt, another Irish grievance.\*

But returning again to our subject, Coquetdale has enjoyed the same exhilarating past as the neighbouring dales of which I have said so much. The same kind of men, under different clan names for the most part, have performed the same doughty deeds, fought the Scots under Percies and Fenwicks, and raided both friend and foe with almost, if not quite, equal assiduity. The Coquet, however, opened no convenient pass into Scotland, and was not therefore so often the passage of invading armies as the other valleys of the Middle March. Like these, however, it is sprinkled everywhere with the fragments of ancient pele towers and bastle houses, for the Armstrongs and Elliots were not deterred by any want of a beaten track. Half a mile above the town, on the hillside, is Whitton, a well-preserved and large pele tower, though with modern battlements. Though the arms of those remote magnates, the Umfravilles, may still be seen graven upon its stones, it has harboured the Rectors of Rothbury at any rate since the fourteenth century. In the eighteenth it was

\* Store cattle, too, from Ontario, Quebec, and the maritime provinces of Canada, where small breeders abound, will no doubt be some day admitted.

expanded by additions into its present character of a roomy and pleasant parsonage. Just above it is a lofty, narrow tower, known as somebody's "folly," which I laboriously ascended by a spiral staircase, and found my reward in a fine outlook up Coquetdale, and over the surrounding mountains, all sombre then under a dark, uneasy sky. Rothbury Church is mostly rebuilt, but around it have gathered some interesting memories of the pious Bernard Gilpin, who preached here at a time when it was hardly safe to tell even spiritual truths to dalesmen, if they reflected too strongly on their cherished customs. On one occasion two hostile greynes, attracted by the eloquence of the good doctor, were brought into dangerous proximity in the body of the church, and were defiantly rattling their scabbards. A battle in the holy edifice seemed so imminent, that the fearless northern apostle left his pulpit and, placing himself between the intending brawlers, rated them soundly in a fashion they were not accustomed to. He succeeded at length in securing a truce for so long a time as he should remain in the country, which was something perhaps, though not much, and he won so greatly on their respect, that a man who took a fancy to his horse was actually forced by public opinion to restore it. On another occasion he was confronted by the well-known glove of defiance hanging over the altar, and ordered the sexton to remove it. This was, of course, a proceeding no Border sexton would have ventured on, so Gilpin took it down himself, fastened it on his breast, and proceeded to harangue his turbulent congregation on the iniquity of their doings, and the obvious sacrilege of making the holiest spot in a church the medium for flaunting their sanguinary passions.

Rothbury should be a good centre for exploring this portion of the Northumbrian borderland, and there are one or two respectable hotels here. But though I have never had cause to seek even a night's rest at Rothbury, I have traversed Coquetdale nearly to its head as well as to its mouth more than once. The former enterprise is much the most engaging, as will doubtless be assumed ; indeed, one of my pleasantest



memories of the county is a delightful round on a gorgeous autumn day, when the blend of valley verdure and surrounding moorland was illumined from morn till eve by a brilliant sun shining from a blue and cloudless sky. We passed the ruinous fragment of Harbottle Castle, perched on its high mound above the now peaceful and picturesque village of turbulent memories, concerning which much could be written had I taken Coquetdale, and not its neighbours, as a type of the Border valley. But that much would be of practically the same nature as the adventures which have so plentifully sprinkled my more recent chapters. So when the critic whom circumstances have perchance made more familiar with Coquetdale than with those of the Middle March chides me, as a long experience enables me to predict with tolerable certainty that he will, for an apparent sin of omission, I must remind him again that this is not a guide-book. And, furthermore, that despite the indisputable charms of Coquet and its historic claims, I conceive the valleys of the Rede and Tyne to be yet more important, suggestive, and more generally inspiring.

On this occasion we looked down on the Coquet, meandering with unwonted restraint through the sunny parklands of Harbottle Hall, the seat of the Clennels, and soon afterwards at the junction of the Alwen and Coquet, followed the former stream into a wilder country, and halted for a space at Alwinton within the edge of the Cheviots. Hence, turning eastward along the fringe of the wilderness, we pursued tortuous and unfenced byways where fir woods murmured and burns gurgled on stony beds. Above, the hills shone green and purple in the bright sunlight, for the bloom was even yet on the heather, and we passed, in due course, the sequestered manor-house, practically rebuilt, of Clennel, whence sprang the family of that name. A mile or so beyond we traversed the grounds of an old country house, which lay back with its encircling woodlands against the Cheviots, and interested me infinitely, that of Biddlestone, still owned by the Selbys. But much more than that, it was also the Osbaldistone Hall of

Scott's *Rob Roy*. Like many other people, no doubt, I had treasured throughout life an Osbaldistone Hall of my own imagining, and I had now to picture Di Vernon galloping over strange pastures, that I am not ashamed to say gave me something of a thrill as I found myself listening for the echo of her horse's hoofs. A secluded spot, and far enough from the madding crowd, is this Osbaldistone of Scott's fancy as things are now—ten miles, that is, from a little station on a cross line, with nothing on the other but interminable moorland and the pathless barrier that shuts out Scotland. But what we moderns call "out-of-the-way" had little significance in Di Vernon's time. There were plenty of neighbours then, and no daily newspapers to upset the content of country people with accounts of gay doings in distant centres, while a few miles more or less were nothing to a horse-riding people. Life was full enough with family feuds and sport and agriculture, which last pursuit appealed in those days to every class, and found exhilarating expression in the frequent fairs and markets. Good liquor, too, an all-important item, was abundant, and in a smuggling country like this the many-bottled squire had a positive advantage over his contemporaries in more populous districts. After three or four o'clock, at any rate, he was supremely happy till he laid himself or was laid to rest, and the toasting of the king either on this or the other side of the water was a real labour of love that never palled. Every one's position was so automatically fixed, without pretension or self-consciousness, that social jars and heart-burnings must have been almost unknown. The squire gave way to the lord who went to court and spoke another tongue as a matter of course, while the more respectable folk just outside technical gentility hobnobbed with the squire to their mutual satisfaction, for the very reason that no troublesome social complications could possibly arise where pretensions were impossible. Hearts were then at one in the matter of foxes, sheep, and cattle, and every tongue wagged pretty much in the same vernacular. The country most assuredly was not dull according to its lights in those

days. Such notions are the product of railroads, and were helped perhaps by the advent of new owners, who had to justify their existence by an assumption of unnatural exclusiveness towards the class from which they had sprung.

We were bound on this occasion for Whittingham, ten miles from Biddlestone on the Alnwick and Wooler line, and passed through a thinly peopled country of large farms, mainly in grass, having all the time upon our left and some way off a high spur of the Cheviots, which craned eastward to the valley of the Till, with the upper and wilder waters of that historic stream washing its further side. We more than once put up black game by the roadside, for, unlike the red grouse, they constantly haunt those large, high-lying, enclosed pasture fields adjoining the moors, known by sportsmen as the "white grass" lands. We encountered, too, a farmer, of abounding acreage in those parts, and well known to my companion, who was galloping a young horse across country from a sheep sale at Rothbury, an incident only worth noting perhaps as typical of life in this breezy land, and in very few others nowadays in Great Britain. Away on the right, later on, we could see Callaley, and a couplet rose inconsequently to my lips from some ballad otherwise long forgotten—

"Mourn, mourn, Callaley, for the gentle Clavering,  
Where life at Staunton cross the foul Scots have riven."

The Claverings have long gone, but they held Callaley for centuries, and were much more than Border lairds.

The infant Aln in the mean time accompanied us down the valley on our left, watering the park lands of Eslington, where Lord Ravensworth's early Georgian mansion stands on the site of a former pele tower of the Collingwoods. Whittingham, hard by, is among the few leafy and picturesque villages of Northumberland. It has a fine church, too, lifted high up amid a bristling graveyard, where the passion of the village fathers of the Border for decorating their tombstones with shears and pickaxes, spades, hammers, and skulls is as conspicuous as elsewhere. Restoration of a

more than usually ruthless kind fell upon the building sixty years ago. But, as a venerable native informed us, the ravagers were happily unable to destroy the lower half of the tower, which contains some Saxon work, for the solidity of the workmanship, and it remains to outlive doubtless the handiwork of the early Victorians in the nave, which I did not see had I wished to, for the church, as usual, was bolted and barred as if the Scots were hourly expected. There is also a pele tower in the village, now preserved as an almshouse, once the property of the Herons of Chipchase, and a stronghold of the village warriors in times of stress. It is now, as the inscription tells us, the refuge of its deserving poor.

The direct route, however, from Rothbury into the head of this long strip of Northumberland, opening northward to the Tweed and shut in between the Cheviots and the central range, runs over moorland for almost the whole eight miles of its course. Only one or two lonely farmhouses break the solitude, and the road clings for much of the way to steep slopes, where heather, bracken, and grey upstanding crags make a fine blend of colour. Vistas of hills and dales remote greet one as the road tops each succeeding ridge, and the wild, mysterious borderland of Scotland displays against the skyline every point of its long billowy progress from Tweed to Tyne.

Descending from the moors, where the road turns away eastward over yet continuous uplands to Alnwick and dropping into the head of this long, hill-girt trough of north-western Northumberland, the ruinous twelfth-century castle of Edlingham stands with stern significance at the edge of the waste. An ambitious pele tower, perhaps, rather than a castle, it contains the remains of much fine vaulting and graceful arching. Massive, stately, and still preserving a good part of its lofty walls, it has stood thus for centuries neglected and forlorn. No country house or homestead, as is so often the case, has gathered round this abandoned fortress. Aloof and detached, as if still keeping a belated

watch upon the deep pass that cleaves the moors behind towards Coquetdale, it remains a singularly eloquent monument of turbulent ages, even in a land where such monuments are so profusely sprinkled. I have seen it many times, and have indeed passed by it since commencing this very chapter, in a June so abnormally late that the scattered ash trees near by showed no sign of leaf. But I prefer to recall it on a certain dark day in late autumn, when the first withered leaves were whirling around its battlements in a north-west gale. For it was then, like all such places, in its element. Of its story I know nothing, except that it is now, I believe, in possession of Swinburnes. Nor, to my regret and reproach, have I visited the little church on the slope above, which is ancient and unspoiled enough to resent such an omission, and lies on my conscience. As we go north towards Wooler, with the Alnwick and Cornhill line hugging the Cheviot foothills on our left, an abandoned country house of distinction and quite imposing dimensions, and no sufficient measure of age or decay to account for the spectacle, strikes an uncanny note in so delectable a landscape. No tragic tale of any kind is associated with a situation unique in my experience, for by abandoned I do not mean merely to the house agent, but with obvious deliberation to nature and the elements, its very windows having been removed. I have heard the story, which I think is quite commonplace, but the effect at any rate is startling to the casual traveller. The shallow valley of the Aln, which little river comes bubbling up out of Whittingham, where we left it so recently, crosses the head of this long, northward-trending depression so soon to be occupied by the Till. Some three miles on, after passing the spot where Surrey's army first encamped on their march from Alnwick to Flodden, a gentle descent through a wooded gorge leads down to the village of Hedgeley, where the Till, just here the Breamish, runs with impetuous, peaty waters to change its character with its name amid the fat meadows of the broadening vale.

Here, too, a mile beyond the bridge and on the left

of the road, was fought in April, 1464, the battle of Hedgeley Moor, where the gallant Ralph Percy, basely deserted by his Lancastrian friends, was left to perish in the unequal combat "with the bird in his bosom," as has been already related in these pages. Across the road in a small wood stands an ancient stone pillar, engraven with the Percy arms, and known as Percy's cross, which marks by repute the spot where he met his death, commemorated by more than one Border ballad. We are here on the edge of the country explored much earlier in these wanderings. For to the east of the valley are the Chillingham moors, to whose feet the Till, abandoning the Cheviot side, has now meandered. Country houses embowered in woods, with the less ornate abodes of large farmers, show here and there. The Lil burn dives under a new bridge in place of one it recently swept away in a burst of unwonted fury, and runs down under the walls and woodlands of Lilburn tower, a well-wooded seat of one branch of the Collingwoods. The upper Cheviots, with their second highest and always finest peak of Hedgehope, cease to be distant, though always constant friends, and confront us once more at quite close quarters. Two miles along the levels is Wooler haugh, where the English army lay before Flodden fight; and the little town itself, resting on the very toe of the greater Cheviots, offers its modest hospitalities at the summit of a brief but somewhat breathless ascent.

I have brought the reader by unfrequented roads from Tynedale to the little Cheviot metropolis, if only in rapid and sketchy fashion, that he may form at any rate some notion of what like is the country, which may be roughly described as the Rothbury district. For myself, I went from Bellingham to a fortnight of almost unalloyed sunshine and a further acquaintance with the north-east coast between Berwick and Warkworth. I was glad on the whole that earlier intentions had been baffled, and that the fates had allotted me the whole month of October at Wooler. October is a risky month, but this one was kind if a trifle sad, and

once or twice prodigiously fierce. This, however, was well, for I would not wish for thirty days of Italian skies in the Cheviots, however desirable they might be, let us say, at Brighton. English hills can look bewitching in unruffled sunshine, particularly in autumn sunshine, but one would fain see them in all or in almost all their moods; and the Cheviots during this particular October gave us most of theirs.

I do not know whence Wooler derived its name, but the present form of it is singularly felicitous, as it lives and moves and has its being in sheep, while what interest it may have to spare is expended in cattle. It stands lifted up some two or three hundred feet above the valleys of the Wooler burn and Till, which unite beneath it a mile away; and its back gardens open almost directly on to the Cheviots, which lie piled up in ascending heaps behind it. Its air has some reputation, while in former days invalids repaired hither in considerable numbers and in pious faith to drink goats' milk whey, the goat at that time sharing with the sheep the occupation of the mountain pastures. The situation of Wooler is beyond question delightful, as well as salubrious, though there is nothing of the picturesque in the few unremarkable little streets, which empty themselves from various directions and at various gradients into its ample marketplace. Its one or two conspicuous hotels wear an unpromisingly old-fashioned air, more suggestive of protracted deals in Cheviot ewes than the entertainment of summer visitors; though I must not forget the Tankerville Arms, generally known as the College, half a mile from town, which is of another class and equal to any present demands of this kind.

Wooler, as I remarked long ago, is quite full in August; that is to say, the grey stone villas which have sprung up in recent years are full, besides, no doubt, many a modest harbourage unsuspected by the stranger within its original limits. The place has no story worth mentioning, and the scant remains of a castle, which probably preceded the town, have little to say for themselves. The church is eighteenth

century and of no architectural interest whatever. Forster and Derwentwater, with Lord Kenmure's Scots, lay here for a short time in 'fifteen, so later on did General Carpenter, who was hunting them. But this was a paltry business compared to the great deeds of arms that were done within sight of whatever town there may have been here in the Middle Ages. For it was intimately concerned with the most famous of Anglo-Scottish battles, while the hill of Humbleton, just outside Wooler, saw the Percy's revenge on the Douglas for Otterburn, and a sanguinary struggle that for its tactics stands perhaps unique in mediæval warfare.

This uppermost point and finest portion of the Cheviots overlaps the Scottish border on its western side, and just touches it at its northern extremity. It may also be described as a triangle, within which the hills are grouped and shaped in a bolder and somewhat different fashion from the long sweeps and rolling ridges that for the most part distinguish the same range as it stretches its broader wastes south-westward to the Tyne. Here the steep, but not actually rugged, hills make a bold display of their respective crowns and shoulders, spreading to right and left, and rising one above the other to the centre of the group, where, in curious contrast, the long hog-back of the "muckle Cheviot"—the monarch of the range—dominates the whole at an altitude of some two thousand seven hundred feet. From Wooler northward, a procession of singularly bold hills, each about a thousand feet in height, rise like an array of flanking buttresses to the mass behind. From their base eastward to the central range of north Northumberland, stretch two or three miles of level valley, largely meadow land. Through this the Till winds its snake-like course in short gravelly eddies and long deep pools northward to the Tweed, on approaching which the low ground changes into a broken surface, throwing up high ridges of woodland or pasture, the most conspicuous of which is Flodden Edge.

But for some miles north of Wooler, this front rank of the Cheviots, like a chain of fortresses, as indeed there is



ample evidence that they were in times ago, look down over the level fertile tract that, till the seventeenth century, was a wide waste known as Millfield marsh. Half quaking mosses, half ragged tracts of broom, breast high, it played a conspicuous part in the partisan warfare of the Eastern March, and served the Northumbrians well. Only a fortnight before Flodden, when Surrey's army was not yet in being, a large body of over-confident Scots were ambushed by a local force, and left five hundred of their numbers dead within its recesses.

The nearest of these menacing fortress-like Cheviot hills to Wooler is Humbleton, known betimes in history as Homildon. A mile walk along the ridge on which the town is planted, brings one to its foot, and here, where is now a scant group of cottages, are the traces of a once considerable occupation, and tradition has it that the present town of Wooler succeeded to an earlier one of some consideration, as things went then, upon this deserted site. But to me, when I first mounted the steep slope of heath and fern, strangely fashioned by the forces of Nature into terraces of curiously artificial aspect, the speculations of the local antiquary concerning the foot or the summit of Humbleton Hill vanished as trifles before the stern realities of this famous spot. Indeed, I had formerly been so much concerned with the wars which in another part of England shook the usurped throne of Henry the Fourth, that this field of Humbleton, so intimately connected with them as it was, and so often pictured in my mind with all its details, held me by a spell very different from the mild emotion which I had experienced at Biddlestone Hall.

Homildon, or Humbleton, Hill, as a border fight was, in several respects, a great one. For one thing, it was the long-delayed revenge of the Percies for Otterburn. But more than this, it was the cause of the battle of Shrewsbury ; while, as a military performance, it was greater still, being, I believe, the only recorded occasion where archers alone, without the assistance of any other arm, defeated and routed with slaughter a brave, well-armed, and disciplined force of four

or five times their number. The fact that these archers were mainly Welshmen must have in some measure qualified this hour of triumph for Hotspur, and that he was forced by his friends to be little more than a spectator in the fight must have been unspeakably galling. The well-known ballad alludes to these indomitable bowmen as coming from "the three shires,"—the shires that is of Bamburgh, Hexham, and Norham. Border ballads, however, are as inaccurate as they are racy and fascinating, and as unblushingly patriotic as one would expect and wish them to be. The Northumbrian historian, Mr. Bates, however, consulted the muster-rolls, and is forced, he tells us, to admit, at the expense of local patriotism, that the victors of Humbleton were chiefly Welshmen. There is nothing remarkable in their prowess, as, till the wars of Edward the Third, the Welsh and their Borderers were not only the best archers in England, but almost the only ones of much account. Edward the First placed his main dependence on them in his Scottish wars. The rest of dismounted England learnt shooting and discipline in the fourteenth century, when the long-bow was perfected. Nor was there anything at all strange in Hotspur's having eighteen hundred Welshmen as mercenaries, since he had just been endeavouring to keep the peace in Wales for Henry the Fourth, during the beginning of the disturbances that resulted in the long wars of Owen Glyndwr. He had now come north to operate against the Scots, and that he should remove from the Welsh Marches, all agog for Richard the Second, still thought there to be alive, or gathering enthusiastically to the standard of Glyndwr a body of its best archers for use against the Scots, was a natural and even a political move. At any rate, he marched with them and a strong force of knights, spearmen, and men-at-arms from Bamburgh, and intercepted ten thousand Scots, returning laden with booty from a raid to the Tyne. They were the cream of a larger army, and commanded by that Archibald, Earl Douglas, whose lifelong ill-luck in battle was a byword in his day. This was on September 13, 1402, and the Scots

took up a position on the lofty crest and slopes of Humbleton, where they could see the English army approaching from the direction of Millfield. It is said that Hotspur, who had with him his father and the Scottish Earl of March, seized the summit of the adjoining hill, which would be that of Akeld, an apparently superfluous and most unlikely proceeding, unless their object had been merely to seek a safe refuge of defence, instead of being, as they actually were wholly bent on attack ; and this, too, when a deep and, almost precipitous dene, channelled by a mountain burn, divides the two.

The English, we may fairly assume, drew up at the foot of Humbleton Hill, probably just above the present high road to Millfield, and to the right of the farm buildings. The double tier of large fields that trends up to the edge of the open mountain land, from which the terraced breast of the historic hill springs sharply up for another five or six hundred feet, was almost certainly the station of Hotspur's force, while the Scots must have been gathered in dense array on the summit and slopes above. Just as, a century later, at Flodden, whose green crest then rose obscure and unknown to fame in the rear of the English, the Scots, at Humbleton, were cut off by their enemies from the fords and bridges of the Tweed, twelve miles away, that alone opened the path to Scotland. At Flodden, though a large, they were a somewhat motley and unassimilated host, divided in council, and with no stimulating rivalry. The Scots on Humbleton were a homogeneous company, hardy Borderers, all or most of them ; their own chief, a Douglas, was at their head, while a Percy defied them in the vale below. It was in fact Otterburn over again, but with a different Douglas and in the daylight. The armour of the Scottish knights, we are told, was new and costly, some of it having been three years in the makers' hands, sufficient testimony to the formidable weapon the long-bow had now become in the hands of expert archers. In those of the amateur, we hardly need telling by those who have made a study of its history, it was quite as harmless

as a modern rifle is, and seems likely to remain, in the hands of the vast majority of Englishmen till they have had a salutary lesson. But its effect at Humbleton is almost incredible hearing, endorsed though it be by every account of the battle ; why the Scots, with their superior numbers and advantageous position, did not take the initiative we may not know. But as it was, these eighteen hundred archers were first thrown forward and then advanced rapidly up the hill by companies, pouring in flight upon flight, with an effect so deadly as to seemingly paralyze all action on the part of their enemies. The lighter armour, the leather or quilted jackets of the spearmen, were perforated like paper. Even the best armour, say the Scottish accounts, was no avail against the penetration of these terrible clothyard shafts ; Lord Archibald Douglas' notorious ill-luck may not altogether, perhaps, be disconnected with some lack in leadership or initiative, or in presence of mind. Perhaps the Scottish Borderers had never faced such shooting, for there were no braver men or hardier tried soldiers in the whole world. If these archers were Welsh Borderers, as Mr. Bates says they were, probably they never had. At any rate, a helpless confusion reigned among them, and the slaughter continued till a certain knight, named Swinton, cried out, " Oh ! my brave countrymen, what fascination has seized you that you stand to be shot at like deer, instead of displaying your ancient courage and meeting your enemies hand to hand. Let those who will follow me, that we may either gain the victory or die." An affecting incident is then recorded by a chronicler ; for Adam Gordon, who was at feud with Swinton, was so stirred by the latter's valour that he fell on his knees before him and begged to receive knighthood from the bravest and wisest of that order in Britain. After that the two reconciled foes, together with Douglas and as many others as would follow them, charged down the hill. But the archers retired slowly before them with perfect discipline, and continued to pour in such a hail of arrows that the charge spent itself in wounds and death, Douglas himself being hit in five places and losing an eye. After this the Scots seemed

to have descended the hill on its further flank, in the hope of more successfully combating the enemy on level ground. Hotspur, now panting for the fray, prepared to charge with all his horse and men-at-arms and drive the half-won victory home. But Lord March, who knew his countrymen better, seized the bridle of the impetuous Northumbrian chieftain and persuaded him to leave the archers yet awhile to continue the fight. These valiant companies, who had suffered practically nothing, now swerved from the hill and marched out across the lower slopes and levels to meet the reforming Scots. The same tactics were repeated on the flat that had been followed on the hill, with the same results. The Scots seem to have again attempted to break the lines, but were shot down as modern cavalry, particularly dispirited cavalry, might be in charging columns of riflemen. A panic seems at length to have set in, and the routed Scots to have set their faces for the Tweed before a bridle was shaken on the English side or a sword was drawn. A thousand were left dead upon the field, and five hundred drowned in the Tweed, which suggests that the pursuit was carried far, though one might well fancy the chronicler should have written Till for Tweed. A large fragment of rock, known as the Bendor stone, stands in the middle of a field just below the road and is held to mark the place of the final discomfiture. The field, at any rate, bears the suggestive name of Red Riggs, and the stone is believed, by those of the peasants who still hold to ancient faiths, to go round on certain occasions with the sun. The crop of prisoners was great and valuable. Besides Douglas himself, two earls, two barons, eighty knights, and many others worthy of ransom fell into the hands of the Percies.

"In bluid-red clouds the sun arose  
Which saw that fatal day,  
Where breathless on the green hill side  
Fu mony a braw Scot lay.

"For sair the English bowmen gall'd  
The Van that ungeared stood,  
Nae thirsty shafts een reached the earth  
Unstained in Scottish blood."

So much for the battle. Of all that came of it, those who do not remember their Henry the Fourth of history may perhaps recall Shakespeare's interpretation of this critical period of his troubled reign, and how he makes "the post from Wales laden with heavy news," to wit, the first victory of Glyndwr's army at Pilleth arrive at the same time as this cheering news from the north. As a matter of fact, it had arrived four months earlier; nor did Humbleton fulfil the satisfaction it promised either to Henry or the Percies for quite different reasons. To the latter, the prisoners captured there were of immense ransom value, and, in any case, the king, they affirmed, owed them much money on their Welsh expenditure. As a further grievance, Henry now demanded that these Scottish prisoners should be delivered into his hands, an outrage on the military custom of the period. The indignant Hotspur, it may be remembered, went south, and had such a stormy interview with the king that the latter drew his sword on him, whereat Percy replied, "Not here, but on the field of battle." How the Percies then rose against the king, released their prisoners at the price of their assistance, and marched to the fatal field of Shrewsbury where Hotspur fell, is a matter of common historical knowledge. The last seen of the Northumbrian hero was his exhumed and already decomposing corpse propped up between two millstones in Shrewsbury market-place, that all the world might know that this dangerous firebrand of the north was, in truth, dead, and that even his name could be used to conjure with no more.

I frankly confess to finding it difficult in this classic land of Border story, so steeped in the memories of recorded deeds, so bristling even yet with conspicuous reminders of them, to have much enthusiasm to spare for the litter of prehistoric ages which lies around here thick enough. The crest of Humbleton itself carries the traces of a circular camp. Just behind it, on a jutting ledge commanding a narrow gorge, are the singularly, well-defined walls of another elaborate but small camp, while scattered everywhere about

among the ferns, heather, and gorse, that clothe the sides of this imposing chain of hills, are the traces of ramparts or round huts. But if those people who sought refuge here had their Hotspurs and Douglasses, we shall never know anything about them. They were probably nothing like so well worth knowing, and their interests doubtless as limited as the stone huts that sheltered them, and the entrenched camps that protected their stock at night from wild beasts, and themselves from enemies in time of stress. The ardent antiquary loses none of his zeal for these, though the shadows of a more luminous day so thickly overlie them. The scattered stone heaps and the broken banks suffer no passing eclipse in interest, though they had been watered by the blood of a hundred mediæval heroes with whom we are by comparison on terms of intimacy. To the less technical wanderer, however, the elusive phantom of prehistoric man, lively enough where it holds the field, for instance, as in Wiltshire, must pale before the realities of chivalry that here confront one. As we stand on Humbleton, or, better still, on the loftier Yavering bell, the next peak but one to the north-westward, with the silent heart of the Cheviots at our back and the whole of the Eastern March spread out beneath our feet, we may be forgiven for overlooking the fact that we are standing in the centre of a well-defined British camp. An excellent local guide-book relates that, though the view from Yavering bell is a renowned one, its chief interest is in its camp. There is nothing to quarrel with in so conventionally correct a statement; but I cannot imagine any wight with a soul within him, thus situated for the first time, putting the attractions of Yavering bell in this order of merit, but a quite uncompromising antiquary. It comes back to me on an October morning of rare refulgence unruffled by wind or cloud. Battlefields of National or Border note lay all about one, and how many scenes of unrecorded strife who shall say. Humbleton was, of course, close at hand, and if the Bendor stone, squatting as it was then in the centre of a field of swedes, reminds the careless rustic as he hoes his way around

it of that heady fight, a second stone, not far from the foot of Yavering itself, commemorates another defeat of the hereditary foe by another comparatively small force of archers but a dozen years later. Flodden, conspicuous with its wooded shoulder and grassy crest, could almost be shelled from here by a modern gun, and between us and it lay the fat meadows through which the sullen Till now winds to Millfield. Far beyond Flodden another scene of famous conflict, the hill of Halidon, rises bleak and high above the mouth of Tweed, while away to the south the woods are visible where Ralph Percy fell at Hedgeley Moor.

Castles and pele towers stood thick upon the landscape for those who could pick them out, which by that time I was happily qualified to do. Coupland Castle, in which an old fortress is embedded, once owned by that fortunate John de Coupland, who took King David prisoner at Neville's Cross, lies just below on the banks of the quick-flowing Glen. In the eighteenth-century mansion of Ewart, standing in the foreground with its flanking woods and open parklands, where Glen and Till unite, is another ancient pele tower. Here the St. Paul family \* have been seated for two centuries,

\* Count Horace St. Paul, second of the name at Ewart, played an interesting part in the world's stage. Having killed a Mr. Dalton in a duel at a moment when the practice was being temporarily frowned upon in high quarters, he had to leave both the army and England. After this he joined the Austrian service, fought through the Seven Years' War, and became a colonel of cavalry and member of the imperial staff. Francis I. created him a count of the Roman Empire, and he contracted a lifelong intimacy with Lord Stormont, British ambassador at Vienna, which resulted in his becoming secretary to the embassy at Paris when his friend was transferred there in 1772-6, and acting for a time in his place. After serving as minister to Sweden he returned to Northumberland and settled down at Ewart, adding to the house and laying out the park and grounds on the model of a demesne in Austria familiar to him. These operations included the planting of the woodlands now so prominent a feature in the Till valley. This same Count Horace, too, gathered within the house many of the valuable pictures, books, and other treasures that it now contains. He raised and commanded, during the Napoleon Wars, the Cheviot Legion, a volunteer cavalry corps nine hundred strong, which, at the false alarm of a French landing in 1804, owing to some heather burning, marched, among others of the Border and Scottish forces, to the coast. Part of their accoutrements are preserved at Ewart. Scott in the *Antiquary*, it will be remembered, gives a humorous account



distinguished in the eighteenth in European wars and diplomacy. Ford Castle, of Flodden fame, stands lifted finely up behind the Till, six miles away; and a mile beyond, the abandoned but still considerable walls of Etal almost throw their shadows on the same tortuous and noiseless stream. Far away, just a grim and solitary fragment on a hill, Duddo tower was plainly visible. Just across the Till, too, beyond Ewart, was the village of Doddington, over whose stone bridge tramped Surrey's hungry army on their march to Flodden, and in the village, dominating the stackyards and sheds of an ample homestead, is another sixteenth-century fortress house, its roofless walls and gables distinctly visible from this lofty perch. But enough for the moment of these tales and landmarks of blood. Perhaps the very peaceful nature of this dreamy autumn landscape, sprinkled with flocks and herds, and giving out no death note now, but the faint rip-rap that strikes betimes the death knell of some still unwary partridge or wandering hedgerow pheasant, by very contrast turns one's fancy to its stormy past. But I make no apologies. The wanderer who has no mind for the drum and trumpet had better remain with Wordsworth in the Lake country, for he cannot escape their echoes here, go where he will, and even if he could shut his ears to them it would be to miss much more than half the spirit of the land. Yet Paulinus—according to Bede—centuries before all this, preached his mission of peace and goodwill beneath the shadow of Yavering bell; for the kings of Northumbria seem to have had some sort of palace in the village, and the holy man is said to have spent much time with Edwin and his queen, industriously baptizing the natives

of this invasion scare. Count Horace St. Paul's literary remains are considerable, and have now for the first time been collated by Mr. George Grey Butler of Ewart, son-in-law of the late Sir Horace St. Paul (Bart.), who left no male heir. A selection of these in three volumes will shortly see the light. Two volumes are concerned with the count's diplomatic career at a critical period in Europe, and are not only of extreme interest in themselves, but are expected to throw a fresh light on more than one international episode. The third volume, to be issued by the Cambridge University Press, contains the count's personal journal during the Seven Years' War.

in the limpid waters of the Glen. But in those dim days the character of the populace was doubtless neither more nor less quarrelsome than elsewhere. It was a good part of a thousand years before the accident of situation made them specialize in the art of attack and defence, and in the subsidiary craft of cutting out, rounding up, and driving other people's cattle. Yet the staunchest of Quakers with eyes to see and heart to feel, who cared nothing for the animal passions of men, whether fighting with slings on prehistoric ramparts, or in burnished armour around historic fortresses, could not have looked out that day from Yavering bell without delight. The golden fern lay in great splashes upon the green and solitary steepes. The long silvery trail of the Glen was below, as it came issuing from the heap of Cheviot spurs, that towards Scotland nourish the Bowmont and the College burns, which merge their names and peaty waters in the first-named stream. Over the meeting, too, of the Glen and Till, and the Kyloe range to the eastward, against whose whinstone ramparts broad-acred farms laid their rougher upland pastures, the North Sea gleamed once more.

June is the time for foregrounds, for bursting leaves, for lush grass before the ripening seed has tarnished its colouring. June, in the north, at any rate, for the song of birds, and assuredly for the May fly and for May blossoms, and most of the good things which poets attribute to the wrong month; a season in which we may even snatch delusive gleams of youth. But autumn for the hills, for wild landscapes, and, above all, for half-hours on summits like this. Since that October day a year ago I have stood there again, or, to be more accurate, on its neighbour of Akeld, which is almost the same thing in the only June-like day of the most deplorable June within memory. I have nothing to add, unless it be to record the more jocund demeanour and varied music of hilltop birds, the wheatears springing from the half-grown fern, the whinchats hovering with joyful chirrup about the topmost frondes of the bracken, in whose safe depths somewhere, their half-fledged young were doubtless

scuttling, or even some belated eggs still waiting to be hatched. The swollen rills, tumbling down the sides of Cheviot on this occasion, added something to the chorus, and the wandering streams of the low country, big with rains, shone with a broader track beneath the unwonted sun. If there was joy on the Cheviot tops that June morning, despondency reigned in the vale below. Here and there a group of bondagers, singling some precocious field of swedes, could be descried, but the tillage land of all this country and of the Merse beyond lay almost water-logged, while the season fledted swiftly by, in which the root crop, so vital to the stock farmer, could be sown to any advantage. The middle-aged and the elderly shook their heads, and made frequent and gloomy reference to that black nightmare of 1879, which 1907, till the middle of July, most ominously resembled. We are all familiar with Scotch broom. But to realize the full splendour of its bloom, I am inclined to think one must see it in June, on its native soil, the Scottish Borderland, where even the glow of the gorse pales beside it. A long trail of gold at the foot of the hills blazed out beyond anything within sight on this occasion, and for a moment puzzled me till I realized it was the embankment of the railroad track heading for Kirknewton that made so dazzling a display.

In spite, however, of that one glorious June day, I would rather recall the Cheviots in the kindly, but not too uniform, October that preceded it. Nor least of its pleasant memories are the grayling of the Glen and Till, then coming into the full pride of condition, and rising readily to the fly. There is a distinct air of breeding about Thymallus; he justly ranks with the trout and salmon family as an aristocrat, though he has taken, perhaps, a little too free advantage of the hospitality that has been extended to him of late in some select rivers. I am inclined to think he has even lost caste just a little by his inconsiderate fecundity and insufficient consideration for the maxims of live-and-let-live in his joint occupation of trout-streams with the aborigines. It is only about a dozen years since he was introduced to the Till and its

tributaries, and the trout-fishing has declined greatly since his advent. For a river, particularly in these days of drainage and quick, short floods, will naturally only support a certain number of fish; and, to judge by the prodigious stock of grayling here, it is obvious that the trout must have been elbowed out considerably to make room for them. You would never imagine, as you laid the two side by side on the grass, that a competition between them would result in favour of the tender, graceful, ladylike-looking and apparently toothless fish. For the trout feels, even to the hand, an altogether more combative animal. He is well provided, too, with a mouthful of sharp teeth, and has quite a truculent expression compared to the meek face of his rival. A trout, moreover, can devour any number of small grayling, but you can see at once that the jaws of the latter save him from any reproach of cannibalism. He can fight on the hook, however, with as much vigour as his lustier-looking neighbour, an accomplishment which gives him his rank among anglers. When in condition, too, he is as toothsome as the average, though not as the best trout. He takes the fly more subtly, and has to be handled when hooked more gently for his tender mouth. He can make a fool, too, of the most skilful angler to an extent rarely equalled by the more downright trout, with all his fads and fancies. He is not really as shy as the other, but is possessed, one can only suppose, of a greater sense of humour. For there are days, only too well known to the grayling fisherman, when he will be rising with apparent avidity in every direction for hours together, and absolutely laugh at anything put over him; nay, worse, for he will rise short at your fly with a prolonged consistency that no trout is capable of. The trout will have his little joke with us, as we all know, for a reasonable period, but he cannot keep it up all day with the grim humour of his bland-looking rival. I spent several pleasant October days by these gently purling streams, of another character from the Tynes, and at that season greatly attenuated by a drought which gave full scope to the idiosyncracies of the grayling.

The reader possessed of Dr. Johnson's views on angling will, I hope, forgive me for recalling as an illustration two particular days, one of which, at least, he will doubtless, though quite wrongly, regard as wasted. On the first I worked for hours up-stream with such measure of skill and industry as I could command, and put half the flies in my stock, either in wet or dry fashion, over the countless rises with an almost blank result. The next day but one, under precisely similar conditions of wind and water, impelled by I know not what to such an elementary and apparently absurd proceeding, I fished a wet fly down the shrunken, pellucid stream, and had to stop long before the sun had touched the top of the Cheviots, as my quite capacious creel would hold no more, so greedy and confiding had my previous tormentors proved. Yet a dozen years ago the people of these parts had never even seen a grayling!

The Till is unlike any other Border river—it might be own sister to the Hereford Teme or Lugg, winding like those prolific streams through low luxuriant meadows, between red and crumbly banks. No wonder the grayling like it, for these other rivers are among their few ancient and indigenous haunts before artificial hatching and stocking began. Like them, it has its brief interludes of activity upon stony bottoms, in this case throwing up fine gleams of red and white and green through the clear swishing waters. Like them, it as regularly follows these periods of gentle fretting by a longer period of repose, gliding slowly between high banks, which, undermined now on this side and now on that by mountain floods, are for ever toppling piece by piece into the stream below. But the Till, from the time it ceases to be the Beamish above Chillingham, beneath which it flows, describes contortions unequalled by any river known to me in England or Wales, and after it gets through the deep pass in the hills between Chatton and Wooler, and meets the lusty Wooler burn from the Cheviots in the levels below that town, it wriggles in quite grotesque fashion down the flat vale past Doddington, Ewart, and Millfield, and so under Flodden Edge

to Ford and Etal. Here the hills begin to restrain its hitherto unchecked meanderings, and for the rest of its brief career it assumes an appearance of much individual beauty, being overhung in places by steep woodlands till, passing under Twizell bridge and beneath the ruinous towers of Twizell Castle, it meets the Tweed. It is at this moment, we may suppose, that Tweed puts its famous query to its tributary, and gets so severely snubbed—

“ Said Tweed to Till,  
‘ What gars ye rin sae still ?  
Said Till to Tweed,  
‘ Though ye rin wi’ speed  
And I rin slaw,  
Whar ye droon ae man,  
I droon twa.’ ”

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MUCKLE CHEVIOT

WOOLER, as I have already remarked, had some local notoriety a century ago, and even later, as a health resort, and invalids were sent there, not merely, as it may be remembered was Grace Darling, to breathe the Cheviot air, but to drink the milk of the Cheviot goats, which was regarded as beneficial. Wooler's little season, which has no longer any concern with goats' milk whey, for there are no goats, nor any faith in them perhaps, was over before I got there, so I secured comfortable quarters in a sunny little old-fashioned, ivy-clad house without the town. Here I became the sole care of a most excellent landlady of good yeoman stock, fine traditions, and a long memory, with a harmonious background of good old furniture which had once stood in the patriarchal homestead in remote and palmy days. There was also a venerable dog, who attached himself to me with unswerving devotion from the first moment. When not waiting for such crumbs as might fall from my table or extended upon my hearth, he spent the hours posted at the wicket-gate of the garden, which looked down on the narrow road to the station, barking furiously at every living thing which passed beneath. This I learned had been the one and innocent hobby of his long life, and had automatically earned him as extensive a notoriety and nodding acquaintance as any dog in Northumberland. He was, in truth, an amiable mono-maniac, for in his normal and social hours, extended on the rug, he did not mind how often you tumbled over him. He was an Irishman by birth, a terrier by designation, though

of no blood to speak of, and, had he been human, would no doubt have gone into politics, and used his apparent truculency with effect below the gangway at moments of heat and stress.

Of course I had made up my mind to ascend "the muckle Cheviot" ever since I had first seen its often cloud-capped head against the horizon from the distant shores of Embleton Bay. My first attempt, somewhat long deferred, was incontinently baffled. The suggestion of a friend on the Scottish side familiar with the mountain, and of more than common knowledge of Border lore, that we should make it together was, of course, entirely welcome. We were to start from his house near Kelso, and, after enjoying the view from the summit of Cheviot, to take our opposite ways home again. The late October morning broke beautifully in brilliant sunshine, and a fresh wind seemed to forebode an ideal day on the hills. We had a drive of some eight miles through the well-farmed and well-wooded lowlands of Roxburghshire to the old gipsy village of Yetholm, lying picturesquely tucked below the Cheviots. I was pointed out, by the way, a country house that is held as the original of Scott's castle of Avenel. Among few readers of the novels, I should imagine, do the *Abbot* and the *Monastery* rank as prime favourites. But the mere passing glimpse of a scene—in itself not unromantic, as the Cheviots were now looming near—which was presumably in Scott's mind throughout two books was a good deal, sufficient, at any rate, to inspire me to a renewal of their acquaintance on the first opportunity. Yetholm, which I had seen before in the first bloom of summer, and in the same company, walking, however, on that occasion, from Kirknewton, on the English side, over a pass through this edge of the Cheviots, was for generations the headquarters of the Faas or gipsies of the Border, and there are still, I believe, a good many in residence. The place is full of stories and traditions in connection with them. Twenty years ago Esther, the last Romany queen, was buried here with much ceremony. Numbers of gipsy kings and



queens lie in the old kirkyard, amid the remains of Faas, Baillies, Blyths, Gordons, and Browns, and other well-known Roman stocks.

From Kirk Yetholm we followed the Bowmont river into the heart of the hills by a road which served the three or four homesteads which were the only habitations in the valley. The stream, now little more than a lusty burn, and of amber hue from a recent twelve-hours' rain, raced below or beside us through sheep pastures, or open moorland, or glades of birch and fern. The sun had vanished, but behind clouds of no very threatening import. Moreover, a cold north-east breeze was blowing, which, if undesirable in a dogcart, was no drawback to a mountain walk in October, and augured at least a dry one. Our valley continued along the Border line between Scotland and England, which many will perhaps be surprised to hear runs for some twenty miles south-east by south. It is roughly marked here by the summit of the hills, which rose steep and wild above our left shoulder to an average altitude of nearly two thousand feet. In due course our mountain road abruptly terminated at a lonely farmhouse, beneath which the Bowmont, now a trifling burn, plunged in rocky pools. This was the Ulfima Thule of the vale, with nothing beyond it but mountain wastes, so far as we are here concerned. Leaving the trap to await my companion's return from an expedition that I, at any rate, had looked forward to with more than common pleasure, we breasted the long slope of the Scottish side of the Cheviots. We may have perhaps been walking for an hour, and had just reached the watershed ridge, about halfway to the top of the mountain, before we felt any particular anxiety as to the prospect ahead of us. It was evident enough that there were storms blowing about, but of the blustering sort that seemed almost a guarantee against the steady rain that could alone defeat our object, or seriously interfere with the enjoyment of it.

I do not think, however, it was more than ten minutes from the moment we first began to entertain faint doubts as

to our immediate future before I, for my part, was wondering whether in the whole of my life I had ever been quite so miserable, and, with a reasonably full experience of wet and cold in many countries, I am still inclined to think I never had been. For without any warning to speak of, while exposed on the very comb of the watershed above the Hen-hole, we were struck in the face by an icy blizzard of fine, wetting snow driving parallel with the ground, and blotting out the whole world but a few yards of heather around us. When it opened betimes and showed a blurred vision of the wild valley of the College burn some hundreds of feet below winding down the English side, there was but poor consolation in the quarter from which it blew. In the light apparel that a dry and balmy month had encouraged with somewhat careless confidence, one was not only soaked to the skin almost immediately, but by the continual drive of this wintry snow-laden blast chilled to the bone. There was not even a low bank or a peat hag as a partial shelter. We had to take our punishment standing on the actual skyline between Scotland and England.

It was in the silence of despair that we ate our sandwiches, and not as fancy had fondly painted, sitting snug and dry with our backs against the cairn of the Big Cheviot, looking out over most of the noble county of Northumberland. Thus we stood, wet, chilled, and miserable. There was nothing to be done, and nothing to be said, even had we felt loquacious. What little there was occasionally to be seen in the wind's watery eye was wholly formidable and uncompromising. People in the world below could, no doubt, have given us a forecast; but up here none was possible. We could not even lessen the discomfort by walking forward, as under the circumstances it would have been futile, and at that particular spot especially so. Yet to abandon our scheme precipitately seemed a little craven, particularly as the top of Cheviot lay almost on my line for Wooler, should the skies clear. The person who at that moment, no doubt from his incidental association with our enterprise, occurred to me

as the most to be envied of all men was my friend's groom, sitting in snug comfort, no doubt, before the kitchen fire of the farmhouse we had so lately and light-heartedly abandoned. At length I, for my part, standing thus helpless and inactive, could endure the combination of cold and wet no longer, though I think the instinct of surrender to untoward circumstances was mutual. A passing difficulty, suggested rather by the curtain of gloom and fine driving snow and sleet which obscured the really sombre scene, was the fact that I was a stranger to this particular waste of the Cheviots. My friend kindly pressed me to return with him; but a sixteen-mile drive, chilled and wet to the skin, seemed a much more risky alternative than facing the storm-obscured wilderness alone. This, after all, was geographically a simple matter; for we were standing on the ridge which overhangs a somewhat famous gorge known as the Henhole, a gloomy chasm, which in local legend has been the scene of some fearsome doings. Down it, however, plunge the infant streams of College burn which thenceforth pursue their way along the deep glen that far beneath us opened and shut in the storm to Kirknewton. My escape, then, if under the circumstances laborious, was, at least, secured, should all the powers of such storm and darkness as late autumn is capable of combine against me. So my companion departed down the long slope towards Scotland with the storm happily in his back, while I descended in its teeth, with such speed as I could make, the steep sides of the mountain to the rushy mosses through which the infant waters of the College burn twisted on their stony bed. I was thankful to have some whisky left in my flask to mix with them when I reached the bottom, for, to be candid, I felt unaccountably shaky on the legs, and queer in the head, and it was not the precise moment when such sensations are altogether comfortable. I was also unreasonably annoyed at being compelled to admit them, for this futile reluctance of middle age to accept the inevitable is a common human frailty. Memory flew back twenty years to a ridge, in all essentials

the counterpart of this one, on the Slieve Bloom mountains in the Queen's county. There, in this very month, under precisely similar conditions, if lashing sleet may be substituted for driving snow, and two guns and a brace of whining setters superadded, a lamented friend, long, alas! fallen a victim to his uncompromising resistance to this same inevitable, and myself, took our stand-up lunch. I remembered, with a pang of sorrow and envy, how we laughed and made merry over our dismal plight, and felt that I could not have even simulated a laugh above the Henhole for the whole county of Northumberland. Altitude in Great Britain seems to mark a difference in temperature under certain conditions altogether disproportionate to its modest measurement; above all when vicious storms from cold quarters are flying about. A real foretaste of winter often strikes the mountaintops with a ferocity unknown but to a few stray shepherds, and in this island, where the thermometer practically never touches zero, several storms every winter pass over its moor and mountain heights that would entirely overcome a considerable proportion of ordinarily sound humanity, if exposed to them for an hour or two. But ordinary mortals never are seriously entrapped in these wintry blizzards. Nor do I think they often realize what English weather can achieve on occasions at two thousand feet. The huntsman of a mountain-pack in Cumberland, renowned even there for his endurance, and well known to me, was returning one February afternoon, in 1902, from hunting above Patterdale. He had killed his fox after a long run, and, with two terriers, was traversing the High Street range, or, to be precise, Riggindale top in the direction of Patterdale, with a furious blizzard raging full in his face. The terriers after a time gave out, and their master, taking one under each arm, struggled forward till he became no longer equal to the exertion, and had to leave one to the fate which speedily overtook it. Determined to save the other, he pushed on till it became merely a question of saving himself, which he had no little difficulty in doing. I met him soon afterwards, and he described the affair as the

narrowest shave of his life. A friend who saw him on his return told me his face was blistered and swollen to about twice its size, and he was laid up, I think, for some days. What chance would the average denizen of civilization, capable of a reasonable day's shooting, or a couple of rounds of golf, have with a storm that could thus treat a man of iron, to whom forty miles over rough ground was nothing, and who, in the local hyperbole, "could walk from Shap to Helvellyn blindfold in the middle of the night"? \*

I had not been long in the valley before the storm greatly modified, and through a grey waving veil of light-driven snow, I could look far up at the ridge of our hasty and reluctant parting, now capped with white, while beneath it a rather gruesome-looking shadowy gorge, that marked the famous Henhole, vaguely shaped itself. It was a fine and solitary scene from down here in the deep glen, and none the less so for the sensation that I had dropped into it so unwillingly and fortuitously as a stranger in a strange land. The flanks of the big Cheviot slowly revealed themselves upon one side as the air cleared, while on the other, those of a mountain named the Schol rose with equal abruptness. The glen was here but a furlong or so wide, and, with the grim lofty white-capped barrier that seemed to close up its head, made a really weird and effective picture behind the flickering veil of snow. I could now see down the valley to its first bend, but there was no sign of those enclosures which always herald the approach to the uppermost mountain homestead. The silence to which the unseasonable storm and unwonted darkness had reduced every bird and beast that haunts the hills, added to the sombreness of the scene—induced a sensation of creepiness, a pleasurable indefinable sense of awe that most of us,

\* Since this incident, set down from memory only, was put in type I thought it well to refer to the principals in it for confirmation. The facts are entirely accurate, except that the first terrier slipped from the numbed arm of the huntsman, and he durst not stoop to pick it up lest he should be unable to raise himself again. Its body was found a few days after close to the spot where it was dropped. The other terrier was carried home in safety.

perhaps, have felt on occasions in our nobler British wilds. For the enjoyment of this peculiar form of exaltation solitude is indispensable. To me, at any rate, it is impossible in company, nor again can I feel it in the wildest prairies or remotest backwoods, nor even among snow mountains. Perhaps the scale of their solitude, however uplifting, is too immeasurable and crude, and lacks those qualities which suggest mystery and uncanniness. The latter is possibly stimulated by the prodigious contrast to a bustling world one always feels here to be so close at hand. I should have enjoyed the situation very much more if the water had not been running down my back, and I could have even put up cheerfully with that but for an untoward sensation that made me unduly resent it. But after I had followed the burn down for a mile or so over bright quaking mosses, or beds of rushes, ferns and heather, or the stony litter of floods, normal vitality, at any rate, if not normal comfort, returned. The last of the storm drifted up towards the Henhole, and a little later the sun burst out with as much splendour as an October sun was capable of. It was vexatious to think that if that common object on the hills, a stone dyke, had been in our way, all this would have been saved, and we should have been now mounting the Big Cheviot with comparatively dry skins and glad hearts, and the certainty of a glorious view. The first outpost of civilization seemed a long time in coming, and its garrison, who quite looked their part, must have been surprised, though, being Northumbrians, they did not show it, at the apparition of a bedraggled stranger emerging upon them from nowhere out of the storm. I here learnt that Kirknewton station was five miles off, and that there was a train passing to Wooler some time in the afternoon. This was vague but not disheartening, for I did not feel like a further twelve-mile walk.

There was a farm track now along the burn side. The sun lit up the lower fells that rose to my right and left, touched the carpet of brown bracken that was spread lavishly over their verdant slopes, and glowed on the ruddy crags that

broke out about the summit of these shapely little mountains of fifteen hundred feet or so. A wood of stunted oak straggled up the side of one of them, which I remembered being pointed out to me in July as the special care of that noted Northumbrian sailor, Admiral Collingwood. The cultivation of oak trees was in the mind of most patriotic mariners in those days, and the Admiral had some designs on the lower Cheviots as furnishing ship timber. He little thought that the coal and iron of his own county would build such sea-going monsters as he had never dreamed of. Following the gradually waxing and always lively streams of the College down its narrow vale, sprinkled, by this time, with occasional cottages and little groves of larch or alder, I struck at length the hard high-road, and in a very few minutes was renewing a former acquaintance with the station-master at Kirknewton. This modest building at the first glance seemed to my anxious eyes to wear the ominous and familiar calm that broods over a wayside station after it has recovered from the excitement of the morning or afternoon train, so it was good hearing that the latter was not due for half an hour. The storm which played such havoc with us had left no particular impression on either the chief or his porter at Kirknewton, which was somehow disappointing, though, looking back at the Cheviots, which make from here a fine display at any time, the glittering white caps of the higher hills in the far background beneath the drooping sun showed with brilliant effect above the bright verdure that waved about the nearer and lower summits. I was moderately dry by now, or, at any rate, felt so, which was something, but was thankful enough in due course to be greeted by my Irish friend's familiar transports of rage at the wicket, soon changed, however, for the most effusive of welcomes. But he got no tit-bits at supper that night, nor did I, for I went supperless to bed, in the face of my good landlady's eloquent protests. I do not know whether science has yet provided a four-syllabled term for a chill on the liver. Be that as it may, I now understood, assisted by the light of a previous and not



LANGLEEFORD





very remote experience in the Rocky Mountains, the humiliating sense of dizziness in the face of the snowstorm after parting with my companion, and descending into the stygian gloom of the abyss whence issued the College burn.

It was a great deal better for general purposes, at any rate, than a bout of rheumatism, or even a prolonged cold in the head, and in a couple of days I was quite ready for another attack on the "muckle Cheviot," though it would have this time to be achieved unsupported by a companion. But the route from Wooler, I need hardly say, approached the mountain by a different channel, the distance to its foot being some seven miles. As the College burn flows eastward from the northern base of the mountain, so flows the Wooler water from its southern base, and forms the usual route thither from the English side. An ordinary road runs from Wooler to Middleton, a hamlet two miles distant, where you leave civilization, and another wild valley, after the nature of that of the College, leads you by many windings, not merely to its uppermost but, in this case, to its only homestead, that of Langleeford.

Middleton Hall is a small and pleasantly situated country house, of no particular antiquity, perched high among woods, above the Wooler water, and immediately confronting the Cheviot wilderness. It was once part of the Derwentwater property, and it will be remembered that the hapless Earl and Forster occupied Wooler, and proclaimed King James in the market-place. In Bowes' survey in the sixteenth century, two pele towers stood here, respectively occupied by two brothers bearing the eminently Scottish name of Rutherford. As you are dropping down into the valley beyond Middleton, the hills through which your path lies group themselves finely in ascending ridges to the two monarchs of the range, Cheviot and Hedgehope—the latter a fine conical peak with a cairn on its point—which, side by side, fill the background with much distinction.

I think this particular mountain valley is one of the most engaging of its kind I ever traversed. Making every allowance

for the opposite conditions, personal and climatic, under which I traversed each of them, its quality differs from that of the College, though both tap the same wild heart of the same mountain. There was nothing austere or sombre about this, under the bright sunshine which flooded it, though innocent for many miles of mankind or his works. Its narrow floor was mostly carpeted with fine green sward, hidden anon, however, under great patches of now russet bracken. The gorse and heather had lost their bloom, the moorland flowers had vanished, for November was close at hand, but the sweet rain-freshened turf matted brightly around the grey boulders, which were strewn about it or pushed their heads above the fern. The wheatears and the other smaller migrants of kindred tastes and habits had left for lands remote, and the curlews had abandoned the hill for the sandy flats of Lindesferne. But the peewits wheeled above with tireless throats and drubbing wings. The stream, never a stone's-throw distant, stimulated but not swollen by late storms, glistened in stony shallows or tumbled in amber pools, which held by now many a spawning sea trout and salmon. But these things were, after all, but the common attributes of all moorland valleys. What gave such peculiar charm to this one were the natural groves of ancient alders and silvery birch, and gnarled, moss-grown indigenous oak, through which both the grassy track and stream from time to time wound their way. No plantations bristling in formal squares were these, but the native products of the old wild waste—Druidic-looking shades pierced by shafts of flickering sunshine, and lit here and there by the white gleam of a rapid. There was a rugged flavour here, too, about the mountain skyline. The fantastic crags of Langley, like the wreck of a great Border fortress, looked finely down on us from the edge of a thousand feet of sheep sward. Hedgehope, nearly as high again above one, with its cone-shaped and rocky summit, rose just beyond, looking across to the Big Cheviot, one might fancy, in some contempt for its lumbering formless proportions and flat, undistinguished top.

Where the two mountains meet, and amid groves of unexpected wood, a rustic bridge and tumbling stream at its very threshold, lay the romantic little homestead of Langlee-ford, a spot unsurpassed in the Cheviots for charm of site and environment. It has traditions, too, worth cherishing, for here came Walter Scott, as a young, light-hearted student, in company with an uncle, and found domicile for several weeks in this very house. The older man was apparently pursuing the mountain air and goats' milk cure; but the two seemed to have spent their time in shooting grouse and catching trout, and Scott, at least, enjoyed prodigiously this experiment of the simple life.

This was in the autumn of 1791, and, writing from here to William Clerk in Edinburgh, Scott says, "I am snugly settled here in a farmer's house, about six miles from Wooler, in the very centre of the Cheviot hills, in one of the wildest and most romantic situations which your imagination ever suggested; 'and what the deuce are you about there?' methinks I hear you say, 'Why, sir, of all things in the world, drinking goats' milk whey!' Not that I stand in need of it; but my uncle, having a slight cold and being a little tired of home, asked me last Sunday if I would go with him to Wooler, and next morning's sun beheld us on our journey through a pass in the Cheviots, upon the backs of two special nags, and the man Thomas behind with a portmanteau and two fishing-rods fastened across his back in the style of a St. Andrew's cross."

The writer goes on to say that the Wooler accommodation was so indifferent that they made interest to get quarters at Langlee-ford, with which they are delighted; he himself particularly, as they are among places renowned for the feats of former days. "Each hill is crowned with a camp, tower, or cairn, and in no situation could you be near more fields of battle: Flodden, Otterburn, Chevy Chase, Ford, Chillingham, Coupland, and many another scene of blood are within a forenoon's ride." He then out-Herods even the average fisherman by telling his friends that he pulls trout, half a

yard long, out of this brook, where I fear ten inches was always somewhat of a triumph, and how all day they shoot muirfowl, fish, and ride. He drinks the whey for the excellent reason that a pretty dairymaid brings it to his bedside at six every morning. They dine and sup upon fish struggling from the stream, and the best of mountain mutton, fowl, and milk cheese. He does not mention the grouse on the table, so perhaps they were indifferent shots, and, as in the case of General Wolfe, when quartered in the Highlands half a century earlier, found "more exercise than entertainment" in the sport.

"So much simplicity," Scott continues, "resides among these hills, that a pen which could write was not to be found about the house, though the latter belongs to a considerable farmer, till I shot the crow with whose quill I write this epistle."

What could one demand more in the way of association of a spot that would tempt one to undue dalliance, even without any trace of it. But clouds were beginning to pass across the sun, and I did not want to be again defeated. The blooming but remote successor of Sir Walter's dairymaid advised me to continue up the burn for a mile to their shepherd's cottage before beginning to climb the long, sloping breast of Cheviot. So I picked my way along a footpath that twisted about among more alders and birches till I emerged at the aforesaid dwelling, upon the edge of the uprising waste. I need not linger over the ascent of the remaining seventeen hundred feet or so, which is nowhere even precipitous, much less perilous, for a pony could readily be ridden with slight deviations to the summit. De Foe in 1728 achieved what to him seemed a great adventure in this fashion, and has left a description quite characteristic of the man of his day unused to a mountain country. He took a guide with him, and five or six country boys, the sort of outfit with which a modern starts on a trip of exploration in the Rocky Mountains. De Foe tell us he rode up the hill "till its height began to look frightful, and I own I wished myself

down again." He and his friend were anxious to alight, but the guide objected. "The young fellows then took our headstalls, and we rode higher, till at length our hearts failed us all together, and we resolved to alight, nor could our guide prevail or persuade us otherwise. So we walked it on our own feet with labour enough, and sometimes began to talk of going no further." They then became seriously uneasy about going forward, as they had a notion that on reaching the top they would be on a sharp pinnacle and in danger of toppling over a precipice on the other side. Finally they sat down, and refused to move another yard for all the guides and country boys in Northumberland. "We were made ashamed of these fears," continues De Foe, naively, "when to our amazement we saw a clergyman and another gentleman, with two ladies, all on horseback, and looked upon one another with a smile to think how frightened we had been." As De Foe ascended from Langleeford his tremors are entertaining. And it must be remembered that he had proved his valour by wielding a scythe against Marlborough's regulars on the bloody field of Sedgemoor. But that timorous attitude towards a mountain was quite usual in the eighteenth century, though few are honest enough to turn the laugh against themselves, like De Foe. As a rule, they allow the blood-curdling accounts of their innocent achievements to stand unqualified, and leave their hardier successors, if by chance they have been their readers, to wonder where these imaginative ancients could have expected to go to when they died!

There is, in truth, nothing perilous or precipitous about the ascent of Cheviot. Three-quarters of an hour of steep walking, mainly through moor grass, cloven with mossy rills, and finishing up with a few hundred yards of heather and occasional rock, placed me on the summit, which the cairn may be fairly supposed to represent. But the summit of Cheviot is unique, I think, among British mountains, being practically flat, and covering at least fifty acres, the greater part of which is quaking bog. I had heard something of this,

but had still vaguely pictured myself looking thence with one eye into Scotland and the other into England, since this vast heap of a hill squats right upon the Border line, towering above everything between the Highlands and the Lake district, and between the Irish and the North Seas. Arrived at the cairn, however, I found there was practically nothing of Scotland, of whose middle and western march I was anxious to get a general survey, to be descried from that side. The sun had vanished, and clouds were chasing about in threatening fashion, so I left the English outlook, already in a sense familiar, for later enjoyment if the fates willed, and traversed by a sinuous route, and no small exercise of agility, this curiously placed half-mile of sloppy bog to the Scottish edge. The English side had been fairly clear. But from this one, instead of the expansive and inspiring outlook over or into the counties of Roxburgh, Selkirk, Peebles, Lanark, and Dumfries, with their numerous hill ranges I had hoped for, there was nothing but a blurred chaos of black-and-white clouds, and a few neighbouring and familiar hills dim in the foreground, and no prospect of a view. No little mortified, I proceeded to jump and twist my way back again, getting part of a leg in occasionally, and practising manœuvres that recalled many old days of snipe shooting on the bog of Allan. But before reaching the cairn again I was enveloped in a dense cloud, accompanied by smart rain. This, however, was altogether a different class of storm from the vicious north-easter of the week before, whose traces were still clinging in white patches to the northern slopes of Hedgehope, and, moreover, a ruinous stone shieling near the cairn provided a quite luxurious shelter. So I sat on its leeward side and lit a pipe, and, feeling confident that the storm was a passing one, rather enjoyed the sensation of having it all to myself, which was obviously the case with this one. There is a curious fascination in being alone on a high mountain-top with the world blotted out and clouds whirling past one's very ears, though it may sometimes be inconvenient. Four years ago, on the top of the Bannau Brycheiniog, the Brecon

Beacons, another mountain of nearly three thousand feet, of whose very existence the average Englishman knows nothing, though a noble and shapely one, I was imprisoned by a driving mist in a dozen square yards of visible earth for a couple of hours ; for this was a peak precipitous on one side as well as unfamiliar. There were no such perilous features in this hog-backed old monster, but I did not want the world shut out for too long, as days are short in late October, and I was anxious to see Northumberland once again spread out before me in this its widest canvas, and to take leave of a large part, at any rate, of the hills and valleys and sea-coast I had roamed in for so many months. My pipe was scarcely out before the storm sped away towards the North Sea, and the whole country, from the Lammermuirs to rugged Simonside above Rothbury, was shining in the sunlight, and the wide North Sea, with its familiar coast from Berwick to Bamburgh and from Bamburgh to Warkworth, lay blue against the horizon. Once more, however, I traversed the weary bog to the Scottish edge, though again to small purpose, for Scotland seemed to be enjoying another kind of weather altogether from her neighbour, though happily keeping most of it to herself. Half a loaf, at any rate, had been better than no bread, so I set my face for home and Wooler, this time keeping high up along the rough hillsides, and only descending to the valley again a mile or so below Langleeford. The drooping sun was now shining radiantly on the green slopes of Hedgehope and Langlee crags, and lighting up the ruddy rocks that crowned their summits, while the sheep, following their immemorial evening habit, were feeding up the hillsides, their clean fleeces spangling the verdant heights like clusters of mushrooms.

Night had fallen on the snuggest and, to my thinking, the most delightful mountain valley in Northumberland, as I passed out of it up the slope on which the lights of Middleton Hall glimmered through its dark belt of trees. I do not know whether my canine friend had prolonged his all-day vigil in my honour, or whether the moon, which was now riding high,



was providing a further excuse for his energies. But half an hour later I heard him hard at it as I came up the dark lane, and was met for the moment with a reception that any night-prowler might reasonably expect from so alert a sentinel. However, he had his reward, for that night I did not by any means go supperless to bed.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FLODDEN FIELD

"Green Flodden, on thy bloodstained brow  
Descend no rain, nor vernal dew ;  
But still, thou charnel of the dead,  
May whitening bones thy surface strew.

"The rancour of a thousand years  
Are in my breast ; again I burn  
To see the banner'd pomp of war return,  
And mark beneath the moon the silver light of spears."

NOT many modern Scots, I fancy, could work themselves up to such a heat of old Border fervour as did that gifted son of Teviotdale, John Leyden, a century ago in his really fine and well-known stanzas. Nearly all Englishmen of our time, and probably a majority of Scotsmen, hold Flodden and Bannockburn as the two events of a great incompleated rubber, an admirable foundation in the matter of sentiment for a partnership between two haughty nations, proud in arms. For general purposes, this prevailing notion, usually, no doubt, a robust survival of the schoolroom period, is quite sound enough. The long intervening tale of strife and blood, though of sufficient interest to those who concern themselves with such things, leave one, after all, with much the same conclusions, namely, that honours were divided. There were plenty of Anglo-Scottish battles on practically the scale of these two immortal ones ; some as bloody or more so, some as decisive and individually calamitous. But Bannockburn and Flodden remain somehow in the mind when the others have grown hazy, and thereby prove, as it

were, their right to a pre-eminence implanted perhaps by a nursery governess, and illustrated with tin swords upon the lawn. So far as a great triumph is ennobled by the cause in which it is won, Bannockburn stands immeasurably above Flodden, for in a sense it was the final vindication of Scottish independence; while at Flodden, though the victors morally deserved their victory, and the vanquished their defeat, it was provoked by the latter upon no really worthy issue, nor was it decisive of anything between the countries. How much more then must the battle itself have impressed itself upon contemporary imagination to have left such a resounding echo! Bannockburn gave a hero to history and romance with whom every Anglo-Saxon child in the world is familiar. Flodden produced no popular hero for posterity, though much more actual heroism was probably shown there. Dramatically, the hero of Flodden is the slain leader of the beaten side, though he had the odds with him. But outside Scotland the ordinary mortal would not like, I fancy, to be asked off-hand who led the respective armies, and would be thankful if some scraps of "Marmion" absorbed perchance at a tender age came to his aid. Coercion of the youthful British Philistine to inspiring verse can, I presume, do no possible harm, and some of the seed may fall on fertile ground, take root and prosper. The dismal task, moreover, seems occasionally to be rewarded by mental revelations that from a teacher's standpoint would easily redeem a wasted hour. A friend of mine, not very long ago, was giving a lesson in English literature at a well-known public school to one of those forms where stodgy youths who have long outlived all intellectual ambition are apt to vegetate in cheerful apathy, till their waxing stature or downy chins made the situation a reproach unto themselves and impossible to their preceptors. The subject was a pertinent one to this chapter, a fact which emboldens me to the digression—none other, in fact, than Marmion. On the suggestion being put to one of the most invincible dullards that he should give his view as to what Scott meant by "The battle's deadly swell," he replied with reasonable

celerity and sublime innocence of any humorous intent that he supposed it was Lord Marmion.

Dr. Moss, of Shrewsbury, where Milton is apparently the time-honoured subject for written impositions, related at a public dinner recently an incident equally as good in its way. It appears that the day after the late Lord Tennyson's death, a Shrewsbury master, while carving at dinner, remarked on the melancholy event to some senior boys sitting near him, when a youth of neither scholarly nor industrious habit, somewhere down the table, looking up with a truculent and vindictive expression, exclaimed fervently, "I wish it had been that beastly old Milton." Marmion has assuredly done much towards perpetuating the memory of Flodden, but Scott, in selecting the subject, was only reflecting the genuine historic and dramatic interest of the battle among all Scotsmen of his bent of mind. Disaster that it was ; useless and futile in object and results compared to Bruce's victory, I could venture the statement, under correction but without any serious fear of reproof in any responsible quarter, that it has fascinated Scottish students more than the other—the greatest triumph of their history. Bannockburn is in fact nothing like so interesting as a fight. It was a straight-out crushing defeat, and was also a general stampede ; moreover, it was so long ago that we do not know the actors nearly so well as we do those of Flodden, which, in addition to official documents, is celebrated by several almost contemporary ballads, in which great numbers of individuals are particularized. Flodden, too, was a crushing victory, but in great part was fought out to the death, and it is distinguished, moreover, by a good deal of strategy, provocative of much discussion, as well as some rather unaccountable conduct that puzzles historians of all degrees, and will probably continue to puzzle them.

I have called the reader's attention so often in these pages to the green summit of Flodden Hill, that he will probably resent being told that the battle was not fought there at all, but on the breast of Branxton Ridge, a mile to the northward. But we shall come to that presently, and it will be necessary in

the mean time to say a word as to what led to the quarrel, and incidentally to justify the statement that it was a futile fight, fought for comparatively trifling ends.

In this summer of 1513, Henry the Eighth, with most of his army available for the purpose, was fighting the French, and in August besieging Terouenne. A truce had been made with Scotland. But Henry, mistrusting his brother-in-law, James the Fourth, had left the Earl of Surrey to watch his kingdom, for there was some ill-feeling on the part, at least, of the brilliant but somewhat heady James, who was cherishing several minor grievances. The dowry of his queen, Margaret, for one thing, had not been fully paid. Andrew Barton again, whose name, it will be remembered, is carved on a rock beneath Embleton sands, had been killed by the Howards as a pirate on the high seas, and the said Barton, though, like all spirited mariners of those days, addicted to irregular buccaneering, was one of the most promising commanders James had for the navy he was building. Then there had been a Border disturbance, and one of the Northumbrian Herons, known as the Bastard, had assisted in the killing of Sir Robert Kerr. There were complications, for though his associates were caught by the Scots, Heron escaped. As for the English king, though willing enough to bring him to justice, he honestly could not catch him, so handed over his quite innocent half-brother of Ford Castle instead, to be detained at Edinburgh. This should have satisfied every one except the hapless Sir William Heron, of Ford, particularly as this Bastard brother was reported as dead in outlawry, but it did not satisfy the Scottish king. Lastly, the French, his ancient allies, for obvious reasons were goading James to cross the Border, and that not merely through agents at his court, for the French queen herself, though no longer a young woman, appealed to his somewhat romantic temperament by sending him a ring and begging him, in the language of an obsolete chivalry, as her true knight to strike a blow on English soil.

James was forty-two ; he had reigned nearly twenty years,

and though not in all ways wise was valiant and well meaning, and possessed withal of sufficient magnetism to unite the varied races and factions of his kingdom in attachment, at any rate, to himself if not to one another. He, at least, was spoiling for a fight, if nobody else was. But when at length he summoned his people to his standard, an army, quoted by both Scottish and English authorities at the formidable total of one hundred thousand men, mustered at Edinburgh. Nobody seems quite to believe this estimate. But it is generally held that at least sixty thousand Scots crossed the Tweed with their king at Norham, on August 22, including the flower of their nobility.

“ That roll of names  
Who followed thee, unhappy James,  
Crawford, Glencairn, Montrose, Argyle,  
Ross, Bothwell, Forbes, Lennox, Lyle,  
Foredoomed to Flodden's carnage pile.”

After a short week's siege, Norham fell, while all the neighbouring towers and castles, Wark, Duddo, Etal, Coup-land, and probably Chillingham, and, above all, Ford, surrendered at once. James took up his quarters at the latter fortress, where the wife of his prisoner, William Heron, was chatelaine. A familiar legend represents the king as a victim to the charms of this lady, who used them to hold him in dalliance while she communicated his plans and resources to Surrey. If this were true, which it is not, James assuredly treated his mistress with slight gallantry, for, after accepting her enforced hospitality, he certainly gutted her house. The great square tower is still standing, near the later mansion, and the room where the king slept is still cherished. Ford is in truth a noble seat, standing among woods above the Till, with the most ornate village in Northumberland—though its near neighbour of Etal is more truly picturesque—stretching along the ridge from its gates. Since I commenced this book it has been sold by its owners, the Waterford family. The late Lady Waterford was famous for her artistic gifts, and the large village schoolroom

is profusely adorned with subject-pictures that occupied her many years, in which the form and features of past and present villagers are conspicuous. I have heard it said by ill-natured outsiders that this and the kindred favours of a long and beneficent regime have sensibly enlarged the heads of the natives, and induced among them a conviction that they are not quite as other bucolics. Beyond the Till rose the long green slope of Flodden, at that day no doubt as bare as the Cheviots towering high behind it, and to which it is linked by a chain of very similar hills, rising five hundred feet or so above the Vale of Till. Now, however, these low Cheviot spurs are crested in part with wood, and their slopes fenced into large fields of grain, roots, and pasture. While James lay at Ford he had fixed his camp and posted his army on the long ridge of Flodden immediately in sight, and two miles away. Here, well provided with tents, and, according to English accounts, with lashings of food and drink, they might have enjoyed themselves, but for the deplorable weather which distinguished the first part of September. A fortnight of plunder, too, is said to have greatly reduced the Scottish army in numbers, Highlanders and Borderers particularly, being always as eager in safely securing their spoil as dexterous in acquiring it.

Surrey in the mean time had not been idle, for news of the siege of Norham had stirred him to instant action. He was a veteran now, both in years and war. "An auld crooked carle," as James called him, but with the mental vigour, at any rate, of youth. The Scottish king had a grudge against him for the killing of Barton by his sons, while he, on his part, had another against James for keeping him away from the French war. Surrey was ably backed by Henry's Spanish queen, Katherine of Arragon, who even worked on the banners with her own hands, and her letters to her husband at the time are very interesting. Urgent was the call to arms that went out through the northern counties, and it was nobly met, though James had declared, as a predecessor had done with equal lack of prescience before the rout of

Neville's Cross during the Crecy campaign, that there was nothing left in England but "millers and mass priests." The Stanleys hurried up their people from Lancashire and Cheshire, including some of the best archers in England. The bishopric of Durham turned out in force under Sir William Bulmer and Sir Brian Tunstall, "the stainless knight," bearing the banner of St. Cuthbert, and burning to revenge the capture of the episcopal fortress of Norham. From Yorkshire and the Craven country came strong companies of bowmen and billmen. Dacre, tough Border fighter and warden of the West March, led on the footmen of the Cumbrian mountains, and a thousand mounted raiders from the Irthing valley and the wild moors around Alston and Bewcastle, while Northumberland, of course, turned out in force, both from the "shires" and the raiding valleys.

Newcastle was the chief rendezvous, and from thence on August 30 Surrey marched to Alnwick, where his force was completed to about 28,000 men ; and thence, moving northward, he encamped on Wooler haugh, a mile or so short of the town, on September 6. From here, six miles away, the English could see the crest and slopes of Flodden covered with the Scottish host. It had rained for a week, and still continued to rain. Provisions had almost run out, and for drink they had only flood water. Surrey had already sent a herald to James, reproaching him for breaking the truce, and enjoining him at the same time to remain and give him battle. There was some further passing of heralds and quaint passages between king and earl. The latter's son, the admiral, who, with his younger brother, Edmund Howard, held commands, sent a message on his own account admitting the death of Barton, and offering single combat on that account to any man in the Scottish army.

The upshot of all this was that James felt it a point of honour to wait for Surrey. His army, gathered from every part of Scotland—Highlanders, Islanders, Borderers, Lowlanders, under their respective chiefs—had melted away to probably 40,000, but the flower of the Scottish chivalry were



or went round the head of it, against which procedure the lie of the ground suggests no reason whatever ; but this is another little matter of contention. The English were fasting and wet, and presumably weary. It is extraordinary how they fought. The Scots were wet too, but well fed and fresh. There is a splendid passage in "Marmion" describing the pageant, as seen from Flodden Hill, of Surrey's vanguard crossing Twizell bridge. This is six miles distant from the former, and out of sight, and is purely poetic licence. When James discovered the English on the hither side, or about to be, of Branxton marsh, with obvious designs on Branxton ridge, all his advantages of elevation were at once threatened. With what must have been extraordinary celerity, he set fire to his camp refuse on Flodden, and under its smoke, carried by a south wind, marched his army to the further ridge, which, extending for a mile or more, faces due north, and occupied it thus. On the extreme left were Lords Home and Huntley, with their respective following of Borderers and Gordon Highlanders. Next came Crawford and Montrose, with about as many more good fighting men, and many lords and gentlemen, all with spears, on foot. To the right of these, and with them forming what may be called and proved the main battle, was the king's own division, a small force under Bothwell being in reserve behind. Lastly, on the extreme right stood some ten thousand Highlanders and men of the isles under Lennox and Argyle.

A thin fringe of tall beeches and other trees along the middle portion of the ridge now marks what must have been the centre of the Scottish army. It is a quiet and sequestered spot, lying back from all main roads. But from Branxton ridge, with Flodden Hill a mile behind, and the Cheviots rising high in the background, a beautiful outlook unfolds itself to the northward. It is the more suggestive, too, as the last that a great company of the flower of Scotland's chivalry ever had of their native land, sullen with clouds though, peradventure, it was on that fatal evening. I have stood here, however, each time in either summer or

autumn sunshine, when women were singling turnips on the broad slope down which King James led that impetuous and fatal charge, or hinds were leading barley on Piper's hill below, an inconsequential knoll enough but a landmark in Flodden literature. Hence you may see Tweed shining in broad current from the grassy mounds above its banks, which alone remain of Wark, once the most famous of all Border castles, to hide itself two miles below, among the woods and steepes of the Coldstream and Norham reaches. Of the Till nothing from hence can actually be seen, though its course can be traced towards Twizell and the Tweed, by the hilltops under which it urges its now quickening and more contracted streams, while the Merse in its heavy patchwork of field and woodland spreads away to the long wild line of the Lammermuirs, behind which lies the heart and capital of Scotland. Surrey's force, in the mean time, was extended in position along the northern foot of the hill. It was a bold move, initiated by a bolder manoeuvre. For he had thrown his army, with empty stomachs, at the close of a long day's march, between the flower of a nation renowned in arms superior in numbers, fresh with well-filled stomachs, and their own country. They had the hill, too, and they had the wind. Had the sun been shining, which it almost certainly was not, it would have observed a benevolent neutrality. Whence came such confidence in that shrewd old general? We know by the messages he had sent to James from Alnwick and Wooler that he was zealous for battle, though he had tried to taunt the king into coming down from his hill "more like a fortress," and engaging on more equal and convenient ground. He had a grudge against James, and his soldiers were probably fired with resentment against the Scots for their untimely invasion.

On the extreme English right Surrey had planted his younger son, Edmund Howard, with three thousand men, Stanley vassals, who objected strongly to serving under a banner between which and their own there was no good feeling. Next came the Admiral Howard, with about nine thousand

Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire men. In the rear of these two columns was Dacre, with a thousand horse from Gilsland and Alston Moor, and two thousand foot from Bamburgh and Tynemouth. In the centre, immediately opposite the Scottish king, was Sir Marmaduke Constable, and near a dozen of his name, with some three thousand Northumbrians and Yorkshire men, and Surrey himself, with five thousand more, variously composed. These two columns probably covered the ground between the little village church, still there in restored form, and the eastern end of the village. To the east of this, again, and forming the left wing, were five thousand more Lancashire and Cheshire men, mainly archers, under their leader, Sir Edward Stanley. They were confronted on the hilltop by the ten thousand Highlanders already spoken of as composing the Scottish right. It must have been nearly five o'clock when the battle opened by a furious charge of Home's Borderers and Highlanders on Edmund Howard's weak column. The ridge was higher at this point, and steeper, terminating, however, in a broad level. Here was the first shock of arms, many traces of which have been unearthed, the first advantage falling to the Scots. Edmund Howard's column was beaten back; but Dacre and his horse, the only cavalry apparently on the field, came to the rescue, and permanently checked any further advantage. Young Howard himself, after much desperate fighting, found his way apparently to his brother's victorious column on the left. Home's strong and practically successful division did nothing more, and constitute an important and abiding mystery of Flodden field. The fighting of this western wing with its opponents would almost certainly have been concealed from the main battle by the falling away of the breast of Branxton ridge and the low, intervening ridge of Piper's Hill. Though not half a mile from the most desperate and critical *mêlée* in Anglo-Scottish warfare, they took no further part, for which there are only two explanations: either Home could not see what was going forward, and having apparently done his part was sufficiently embarrassed by Dacre's

vigorous horsemen to keep him still occupied till dark, or else that his men, being Borderers and Highlanders, satisfied with their successful attack, scattered to plunder the dead, which were fairly numerous. At any rate, eight or ten thousand first-class troops remained out of the fight, and why they did so is still a puzzle to the historian. Home's patriotism was not seriously called in question, though when the scapegoat, quite inevitable to such a great disaster, was called for, he did good service in many quarters. In the mean time, the Admiral Howard had scattered Crawford's column, himself calling loudly on the king, and hurling back the taunts that James had flung at him of skulking on the high seas. "Those who boasted of having sought me everywhere, where are they now?" he shouted. Crawford answered the challenge for his king, and the two fought with axes till the Scottish earl was slain. The Earl of Rothes, rushing to the rescue, fell at the hands of the two Percies, who were at Howard's side. There were eight French captains, too, with this division, all of whom fell. King James, from the top of Branxton ridge, fired by the spectacle either of Home's more distant success or the other's nearer failure, prepared to lead his own division into the fight with the undue haste as a captain, and reckless ardour as a soldier, for which he was noted.

Descending from his horse, pulling off his boots, grasping a spear and shield, surrounded by a group of his nobles, who did likewise, and followed by his whole division, he bore down impetuously on Surrey's central columns. From Branxton ridge the main battlefield looks to the casual eye like a continuous downward slope to the village, and it is thus always described. I have done so here myself, as a matter of fact; but just short of the spot where the English centre would naturally have been extended, it is crossed by a wide trough-like depression, beyond which a descending army at the charge would find their impetus entirely checked by an upward slope of fifty to a hundred yards. Along the ridge of this it seems more than probable that the English centre must have awaited the king's attack, and whatever slight

advantage a slope might give to foot soldiers was, in fact, at this point theirs, and not the Scots'. Moreover, the English guns seem to have played on these advancing columns with some effect ; with more, at any rate, than those of the Scots, which, though somewhat historic weapons, and quite numerous, did very little damage, possibly from the fact of being fired downhill. Then began that tremendous hand-to-hand conflict, which till another element came in was as doubtful as it was fierce. This other element was Surrey's left wing. Stanley and his five thousand archers composing this, away to the east of the present village, like King James and his friends, pulling off their shoes to get a firmer hold on the slippery soil, seem to have moved up the hill to meet their immediate opponents, the ten thousand Highlanders of Argyle and Lennox. This force, heterogeneous and undisciplined, probably ill-protected, and certainly unaccustomed to face the best archers in Europe, were stung to madness by the whistling arrow flights. Breaking their ranks in futile and spasmodic efforts to close with their enemy, they were easily shot down, and in due course driven up the hill in rout and over it, to scatter and be seen no more so far as the battle was concerned, leaving their leaders dead upon the field. Having thus turned the Scottish position and gained the ridge, Stanley, while his victorious men were getting their breath, could look back at the main battle in furious progress towards the foot of the slope below. Wheeling round and charging down and across the hill, with his force practically unimpaired, he struck the Scots engaged in their equal and not unhopeful strife on flank and rear. Whatever the latter's numerical majority at the opening of the battle, the odds were now much against them. Their right wing had fled bodily ; their left, of much more value, had dropped mysteriously out of the fight. Crawford's broken column may have rallied in part, no doubt, but inevitably thinned in that temptation to fight which the near neighbourhood of Scotland must have offered, and the prospective difficulties which the crossing of a swollen Tweed at the spear's point involved. The breaking

of this fresh wave of men upon the Scottish column, perhaps about sunset, was the beginning of the end. Every man of the English army, unless the mysterious Home beyond Piper's Hill was, in truth, occupying any of them, was now engaged in the main battle. Yet, even so, it is not easy to account for odds much greater than three to two. But the Scots, beyond doubt, were more or less enveloped. Stanley's archers, falling on their flank and rear, had them at a great advantage; and Dacre's horse, too, are described in most accounts as joining later in the fray. At any rate, till dark closed the scene, its unparalleled frenzy was of a kind that burnt itself into the imagination and memories of a generation well hardened to blood and slaughter. The Scots after Stanley's charge seem always to have been fighting a hopeless battle round their king; but there was no thought of flight, nor, indeed, of surrender, for no quarter was offered, and the question of ransom, which should here have yielded a golden harvest, was forgotten by the churls and yeomen, whose bills played dreadful havoc and made ghastly wounds.

" But yet though thick the shafts as snow,  
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,  
Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,  
Unbroken was the ring.

No thought was there of dastard flight,  
Linked in the serried phalanx tight;  
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,  
As fearlessly and well,  
Till utter darkness closed her wing  
O'er their thin host and wounded king."

Night alone, as Scott says, put an end to the carnage, when the survivors of the decimated column vanished into the darkness, and in scattered bands, beaten, but not disgraced, followed the various paths towards Scotland, that so many of their countrymen, of whom as much could not be said, had already taken in the daylight. The exhausted English camped where they had fought. The only sign of a living or an unwounded Scotsman next morning was Home's ever-mysterious column, who might conceivably have turned

Flodden into a Bannockburn, hovering for a short time at the western edge of the late battlefield, where they had spent the night. "If we had only an hour more of daylight," said the English soldiers, "we should have given the Scots such a lesson that they would have been ware how they entered the realm of England again." Forty of the victors were knighted by Surrey on the field. Never in history, probably, have Englishmen fought better.

The spectacle presented, however, next morning must have satisfied even the most sanguinary Northumbrian. The loss of the Scots, taking an average of estimates, may be put at eight thousand. Probably more than half of these fell in the last great carnage, the centre of which, as also roughly marking King James' fall, is generally held to be the spot occupied by the present vicarage.\* The bodies of the slain, according to custom, had been quickly stripped, and when the king was found late in the day with an arrow wound in his forehead, several gashes from bills on his body, and naked as the rest, he was identified by Dacre, who had seen him in life more than once. Great numbers of Highlanders had been slain on the English left by Stanley's archers. Very few, indeed, of the Caithness men returned to the north, and for generations it was there considered unlucky to go to war in green, the colour in which they fought that day.

But the wail that went up for Flodden, from one end of Scotland to the other, has always been a sounding note in Scottish history, not so much for the mere numbers left dead on the field, but for the havoc wrought in famous houses. Every family of note lost one or more members. "I never read," says Lindsay, "in tragidie nor story at ane jounaye so many nobles slain for the defense and life of their soverane."

The king's natural son, a short-sighted, studious youth and bishop of St. Andrews, fell at his side. Besides these one bishop, ten mitred abbots, twelve earls, fourteen lords, and a proportionate number of private gentlemen lost their

\* Some say Piper's Hill.

lives. It has been a trite saying among Scottish writers that Flodden threw Scotland back a hundred years or more. Under James the Fourth she had made marked strides in importance as a nation, and prosperity as a people, and the loss of so many of her natural leaders was a disastrous blow. The death of the king still more so, as it entailed a long minority, which, in ancient Scotland, always spelled chaos while the bitterness of so overwhelming a defeat without any extenuating cause bit deep into the national pride.

Posterity, however, has treasured rather the gallantry of the final stand and the tragic pathos of the whole business. The well-known and beautiful ballad, "The flowers of the forest," was not composed in praise of bluebells or wood anemones, as thousands of southerners, familiar only with its air or title, no doubt have lived and died in the belief, but of the young men of Ettrick forest who fell at Flodden. Written in the eighteenth century by a lady of the Elliot family, as a lament on the battle, with such skilful imitation of the ancient manner as quite to impose on Scott, it has been thought to enclose the germs of some genuinely ancient wail. The hungry and exhausted English army scattered to their various homes immediately after the battle of Flodden, or Branxton Moor, as at the time it was often and more correctly called, with appetites only sharpened, perhaps, by the abundance of beer that they found in the Scottish camp. The king's body was sent by Dacre to Surrey, at Berwick, and embalmed. As breaker of the truce between England and Scotland, James had died an excommunicate under the Pope's decree, and the rites of Christian burial were, for this reason, and somewhat ungenerously under the circumstances, refused by Surrey. The corpse was sent south to the Monastery of Sheen, where it lay wrapped in a sheet of lead till the Reformation, when the place passed into the hands of the Duke of Suffolk. After this it was tossed about the house like a piece of useless lumber, according to Stow, the historian, who saw it himself lying about among a litter of rubbish, "Some idle workmen for their foolish pleasure," he tells us,



"hewed off the head, and Lancelot Young, master grazier to Queen Elizabeth, finding a sweet smell, due no doubt to the spices with which it had been embalmed, issuing therefrom, took it home with him, but ultimately caused it to be buried in the charnel house of St. Michael's Wood Street."

Such was the end of one of the proudest and most popular of Scottish kings, and such was Flodden. The traditional view of it, shared to the full by Scott, as crushing for a time the very spirit of the nation, has been somewhat modified of late by recent writers. The further invasions of Scotland on a large scale, which occurred throughout the century, destructive as they were, were met with spirit if not always with success by that distracted country. Their ravage has been often held without justification as an aftermath of Flodden, and loosely associated with that ghastly catastrophe. But in the case of the Borderers, whom popular imagination has been taught to regard as the greatest sufferers by Flodden, they have been shown, by a recent Border writer, to have been the least injured of any of the contributories to James' army. In view of the fact that they were nearly all in Home's division, which suffered little and was never broken, the conclusion seems an obviously just one.

The English versifiers were busy after the great victory. Two well-known ballads are extant, that of "Flodden Field," by a retainer of the Stanleys, being very lengthy and full of personal detail, and revelling in quaint and resounding crashes of alliteration. There is also a contemporary Italian account written immediately on the receipt of the news.

Such few visitors as now turn their steps to Flodden Field seem to find their inspiration more in Lord Marmion than in James the Fourth or Surrey, in Dacre or Stanley. The Sybil's well, from which the dying lips of that fine creation of Scott's fancy were laved, still bubbles up at the roadside beneath the little church at Branxton, around which numbers of the slain must have found their nameless graves. Thanks to the well-meant but ill-directed enthusiasm of a former lady

of Ford Castle, the less critical wanderer is beguiled away to a modern Sybil's well, walled in and inscribed with Scott's well-known triplet, near the crest of Flodden Edge, a mile in the rear of the Scottish line of battle, and much more than that from the original spring where Sir Walter quite accurately laid out his dying hero. The latter, it will be remembered, fell in the younger Howard's early efforts to stem the first charge of Home and Huntley ; and here, on the high bank near by the little church, and just above the roadside well, one may forget for a brief moment the enthralling realities of the living past in a spot that, despite its almost protesting air of rural in consequence and rural isolation, is indelibly associated with those world-famous lines that close the death scene in Scott's immortal poem—

“ A light on Marmion's visage spread  
And fired his glazing eye,  
With dying hand above his head,  
He shook the fragment of his blade,  
And shouted victory.  
'Charge, Chester, charge ! On, Stanley, on !'  
Were the last words of Marmion.”



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